

AUGUST, 1906

15 CENTS

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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



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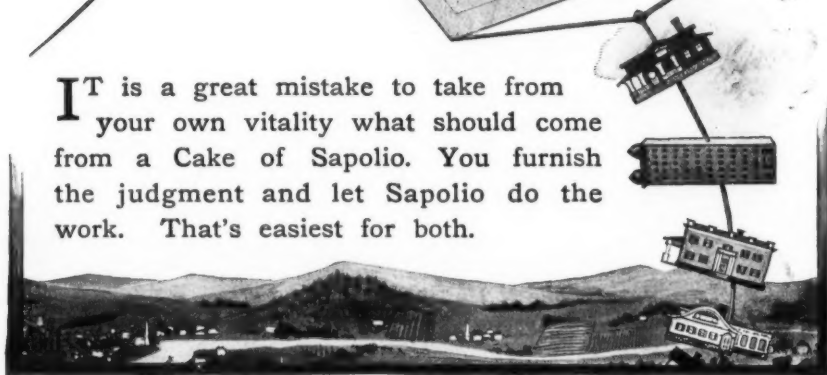
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VOL. XVIII

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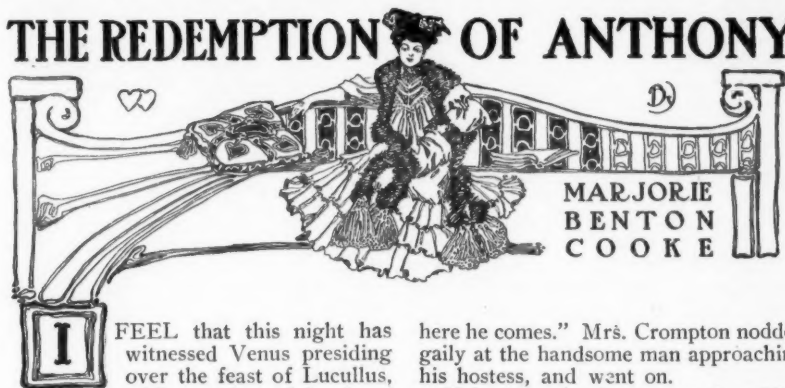
AINSLEE'S

VOL. XVIII.

AUGUST, 1906.

No. 1.

THE REDEMPTION OF ANTHONY



MARJORIE
BENTON
COOKE

I FEEL that this night has witnessed Venus presiding over the feast of Lucullus, while at her right hand sparkled the wit of Æschylus—he was a wit, wasn't he?" Mr. Peter Schuyler bent low over Mrs. Kaley Martin's hand.

"Good gracious! Peter, you're getting awfully complicated!"

"Well, in words of one syllable, what I wish to say is that you look your loveliest, Tony was great, and I've had a splendid time."

"For all of which I am exceedingly grateful. You off, too, Nan?"

"I am. Peter, move on, so I can say my 'day-day.' I've had a very nice time, Louise, and lost my heart to The Parson."

"Good! Isn't he a dear? But I warn you, Nan, that you're to let him alone. He's much too nice for you to play with."

"My dear, he's actually clever! Think of anything in the church being clever! And he never said one word about my sins!"

"He knew there was no time—at a dinner."

"*Au contraire*, he thinks I'm a sort of worldly angel. See if he doesn't—

here he comes." Mrs. Crompton nodded gaily at the handsome man approaching his hostess, and went on.

"I have to thank you, my dear Mrs. Martin, for a very pleasant evening," The Parson said. "Such a delightful woman, Mrs. Crompton—real spiritual quality."

"Spiritual, did you say, Parson?" Mrs. Martin laughed. "I should never have thought of that adjective for Mrs. Crompton."

"No? She seemed so to me. When does the little girl arrive, Mrs. Martin?"

"Priscilla? She comes to-morrow at five."

"Good! I shall come soon to see her, if I may. Good night."

"Good night."

He passed on toward the dressing-room, and a voice behind her said: "Well?" She turned, to face Mrs. Crompton's laughing eyes.

"He thinks you have 'spiritual quality'—them's his words," she giped.

"Dear old soul!" Mrs. Crompton said. "I remembered that hundred and fifty I won last week at bridge, and promised him an altar-cloth. Spiritual quality—that's great!"

She disappeared, laughing, and one

by one the guests departed, until the door finally closed upon the last, and Mrs. Martin turned, with a sigh of relief, to the man who stood waiting.

"Shall I go?" he asked.

"Oh, no—smoke here."

He rolled an armchair toward the fire, and when she was comfortably ensconced he turned off the electric lights and came and stood before her in the firelight, looking down at her.

"Well?" said she, looking up at him.

"Well," he replied, lighting a cigar.

"Aren't you going to say anything pleasant, Tony?"

"It was a great success."

"Oh, the dinner—yes; but——"

"But what?"

"Tony, you're so unsatisfactory! Why can't you say that I never looked better in my life; that I made an exceptionally difficult dinner go by sheer force of will; that you think I'm the eighth wonder of the world, and a few comfy things like that?"

He blew smoke leisurely before he answered. "What's the use? I think it, and you know it, so what's the use of babbling about it?"

"How like a man! It's the babbling that counts; not the truth."

"What nonsense!"

"It's not nonsense. If you think agreeable things, it's your Christian duty to say them. It helps more than anything in the world."

"Well, everybody else has done his Christian duty to-night, so can't you let me off?"

"No—for you're the only one who counts."

"I don't know, you know. I always put my foot in it when I try."

Mrs. Martin sighed and smiled. "No matter—it's really too hard work to extract it. You were great at the table. I should never have swung it without you."

"Ground out a few ancient tales—that's all I did. You were the whole thing."

"I had a splendid time. I felt as if it were my last fling."

"Your last fling?"

"Yes. To-morrow, you know——"

"To-morrow? Well, what happens to-morrow?"

"Priscilla comes home."

"Priscilla? Oh, yes, the girl. Well, what's the difference?"

"Mrs. Kaley Martin, the mother of a débutante, is not the same person as this Mrs. Kaley Martin."

"What difference can she make in your life?"

"I don't know—she may make none; and yet I have a feeling, a foreboding, that she is going to make a great deal."

"What sort of a girl is this daughter of yours, anyhow?"

"I don't know—really, I don't. I've never gotten at her much. You see, she's been away to school for so long, and before that there were governesses——" She leaned toward him impulsively. "Tony, do you think it's a horrible thing for me not to want this strange young woman to come here and interfere with my whole scheme of life?"

"She'll probably marry."

"I don't know—perhaps. She's rather pretty, I think; but she is not clever."

"That won't hurt her chances any. Most men prefer the other kind—at home."

Mrs. Martin looked at him fixedly a moment. "I wonder what she'll think of you, Tony?"

He flicked his ashes into the grate. "I assure you it's a matter of total indifference to me. I don't like girls."

"I suppose she'll think it's shocking for an old lady like me to have a beau."

"Am I a beau?"

"Aren't you?"

"No; I'm your creature—a thing you made with your own hands."

"Don't. I only helped you use what the gods gave you."

"You only saved what I was determined to destroy. Don't think I don't know what you've done, Louise."

"Tony, if you should thank me, I'd hate you!" she flung out at him.

"Even I couldn't be so banal as that."

The silence grew heavy.

"Perhaps the girl is going to bring you a new interest."

"Perhaps"—indifferently.

"She may prove a great comfort to you. You must be lonely sometimes——"

"Tony, you talk like an old woman. Go home—do!"

"You deny that you're lonely?"

"I never think of it. I haven't thought of myself for three years."

"What have you been thinking of?"

"Your success."

"My success! Well, I suppose most people would say that it had come."

She looked at him quizzically. "Most people! What was the sale of the last book? Three editions in—how long was it?"

"Editions? You don't measure success by editions. Do *you* think I've succeeded?"

"Splendidly."

"You're sure?"

"Quite sure. To me you succeeded from that day you came to me and said: 'From this day I'll never touch a drop to drink.'"

"Lord, what a drunken sot I was! What on earth ever gave you the hint that there was a spark in me worth saving, Louise?"

"You haven't forgotten that night we met at the Carltons? How delightfully you talked about your work and your ideals——"

Drake broke in crisply. "And then drank too much champagne and blubbered my failures. I remember only too well, unfortunately. The question is, why did you send for me later?"

"Because I thought it might prove worth while to redeem you."

He laughed. "I remember I tossed up to see whether or not I'd come in answer to your note."

"You were a perfect bear at first; determined not to be patronized, nor made friends with."

"What a brute I must have been, dear!"

She winced, and smiled up at him. "You were an uncouth creature those days, Tony. I feel quite proud of you now when I think back to them."

"How you lugged me up, didn't you?—step by step! Why, I don't think I ever knew a lady until I knew you."

"Nonsense!"

"Don't belittle any of it. You shamed me into being a decent creature, and what I am I owe to you. I've worked like a slave these three years just to prove to you that you weren't mistaken—that there was something to save, perhaps—and now, as far as the world goes, I'm a successful man."

"Why do you say, 'as far as the world goes'? Don't you consider yourself successful?"

"No, there's no such thing. I write books and they sell, and so some little men who call themselves critics say I'm the hope of the future, and such rot. Does that make me a big man? Does it make me a happy man? Does it make my life rounded, complete?"

He walked to and fro, out of the light into the shadow and back again, Mrs. Martin watching him.

"What you need is change. Why not go away for awhile? Why not go abroad?"

"I can't. I must work."

"Take your work along."

"Will you go, too?"

"I? I cannot. There's Priscilla——"

"Then I can't go. I can't work without you"—impatiently.

"You haven't tried."

"There's no use trying. I know. Your judgment, your taste—I must have them until I'm bigger, surer of myself."

"And then?"

He stopped as if she had interrupted a train of thought. "What?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"Do you think it's been worth your while?"

"Eminently."

"And what have you gotten out of it—except a little vicarious joy?"

"I'm essential to you in your work—you've just said it—that is my reward."

He drew a chair up beside her and took her hand. "And now, what next?" he said.

She rose and walked away from him, breathing heavily. "I'm too tired tonight to talk of—that."

"What a selfish brute I am not to remember that! I'll go."

"Yes, please do."

She came to him and gave him both her hands, and he held them closely a minute, looking at her. Suddenly and for the first time he took her in his arms and kissed her lips; then without a word he went out, and Mrs. Martin hid her face in her hands for joy, and—wept.

CHAPTER II.

"Everything in order, Mary?" asked Mrs. Martin, entering the room intended for Priscilla and looking about casually.

"Yes, madame; I think so."

"Have some flowers on the dressing-table."

"Very well, Mrs. Martin. Are you driving to the station to meet Miss Priscilla?" she continued, with the privilege of an old servant.

"No, oh, no! I've sent James for her. We'll have tea in my dressing-room when she comes, Mary."

"Very well."

Mrs. Martin wandered about aimlessly, rearranging things absent-mindedly, and finally went back to her own part of the house. She was restless; the absurd realization began to dawn upon her that she dreaded her daughter's home-coming, dreaded the first half-hour and the first weeks of adjustment. She even blamed herself a bit that she knew so little of the girl's real self. Her physical needs and habits she had always considered religiously, but farther than that she had never gone.

Mr. Kaley Martin's death, ten years before, had been a distinct relief, and she had wilfully set aside all reminders of him—and Priscilla came under that head.

Mrs. Martin threw herself into a comfortable chair, and gave herself up to a consideration of the evidence at hand in regard to Priscilla. She recalled the rather prim little miss of fifteen who had spent the summer vacation at home two years before (that was the last real visit, for the girl had

been abroad all the time since); she recalled the stiff letters, sometimes so childish in their outlook upon life as to be pathetic. She realized that she had no idea of the girl's tastes or thoughts, and she got up petulantly.

"I suppose good mothers are born, not made; it's evidently not my forte. The truth remains, Priscilla is a trial."

The door behind her opened swiftly, and she turned. The girl stood there a moment, motionless, while mother and daughter measured each other. Mrs. Martin's first impression was half pleasure, half dismay—the girl was a beauty, there was no doubt of that.

"Mother!" she said, in a little, half-choked voice. "Mother!"

She put her arms about her mother's neck and clung tightly, so tightly that Mrs. Martin could feel the beating of her heart. She almost resented the passion of the embrace.

"How do you do, Priscilla?" she said, releasing her gently. "My dear, how you've grown! Let's have a look at you." She held her off and took an inventory of gold hair, hazel eyes wet with tears, mouth quivering with emotion, slight, straight young figure.

"Mother, are you glad? Oh, I suppose you couldn't be as glad to have me home as I am to be home!"

"You wanted to come, then?" Mrs. Martin inquired.

"Wanted to? It's been my dream for years—to belong at home. This last year I've marked off each day and night that brought me nearer."

Mrs. Martin turned and rang for tea. "Take off your things, Priscilla. Didn't you like it at school?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose I did," she answered, putting her things aside. "It was all very well, but, of course, it wasn't home."

"No, I suppose not. Put the things here, please, Mary."

Priscilla flew at the maid. "Oh, Mary, I'm so glad to see you! How are you? And how's the cook, and Hannah, and all of them?"

"They're well, thank ye, Miss Prissy, and we're all delighted to have ye home fur good."

"Thanks—it's just heavenly to be here."

Mrs. Martin watched Mary's pleased exit and the girl's flush of pleasure. "I thought you were going to kiss her, Priscilla," she said, in amused sarcasm.

The girl flushed. "Was I too enthusiastic? You see, I just love Mary; she means home to me—she and Hannah and the cook. They were so good to me that last time I was here—I was hardly ever lonesome."

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Martin, with a flash of anger at something the unconsidered speech implied. "How do you take your tea?"

"Lemon and two lumps, please."

Priscilla drew her chair opposite her mother's and fixed her eyes on her steadily. "Isn't this sweet for us to be sitting here having tea together, mother?"

"Yes, isn't it nice? Now tell me about your two years of Europe."

"Oh, don't let's! Some other day for Europe—now let's talk about things that count—about you and me. Mother, have you wanted me ever?"

Mrs. Martin moved uneasily. "Don't let us be emotional, Priscilla; it is too great a strain. Let us just stick to the facts. We've lived our lives practically apart, and now we're going to try to live together in peace and happiness, but we mustn't demand too much of each other all at once."

"So—you haven't," Priscilla concluded simply, and her eyes never wandered from her mother's face. "Of course I don't see why you should, but I hoped—I think I don't care for any more tea." She got up and wandered to the window.

Mrs. Martin felt uncomfortable, futile. She was not handling the situation in her usual brilliant way. "I hope you are going to be very happy here. We'll have parties and dinners and balls, and amuse ourselves splendidly. I've planned a cotillion for you in a couple of weeks, and you're to lead it with Peter Schuyler, the most popular youth in town. Oh, we'll amuse you, my dear!"

"Thank you, mother," the girl said, turning to her.

Mrs. Martin continued to fight for time. "Then we'll induce Tony to have a house-party for you down in the country. You'll enjoy Tony—Mr. Anthony Drake, you know."

"Drake? The Drake who wrote 'The Soul of Ignace'?"

"Yes; you know about him, then?"

"He's wonderful, isn't he?"

"You haven't read 'The Soul of Ignace'?" demanded Mrs. Martin, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes; several times."

"Good gracious! didn't they choose your books for you?"

"I've read all his things."

"He's an interesting man—he's here a great deal."

"Here—in this house? Then, I shall meet him!"

"Doubtless"—smiling.

A knock at the door interrupted them, and the man brought in a card.

"He's here now. Run down and talk to him until I get into another gown."

Priscilla actually turned white. "I? Go and talk to *him*? Oh, I couldn't!"

"Nonsense! Run along."

"Mother, I'd be frightened to death. I couldn't!"

"Don't be silly, Priscilla; he's nothing but a man. I'll be down in a minute."

She disappeared into her bedroom, and Priscilla watched her go with frightened eyes.

"She *wants* me to go," she whispered, and turned and walked downstairs.

Mr. Anthony Drake was pacing to and fro in the drawing-room, his thoughts upon the coming half-hour. The developments of the night before seemed to him to demand immediate readjustment of his relations to Mrs. Martin. He had spent the night going over the past and interrogating the future, and had arrived at the obvious conclusion that they could not go on forever in the halcyon camaraderie of the last three years, especially now that the daughter was arriving to complicate the situation. He turned at the step on

the stair, and faced Priscilla, who stood between the curtains, transfixed with fear in the presence of the great man. He stared silently.

"I am Priscilla," she said, in a faint voice. "I am Priscilla Martin——"

She advanced and held out her hand, and Drake recalled himself with difficulty.

"Oh, yes, to be sure!" he said. "How do you do?"

She eyed him gravely, noting his evident irritation. "I shouldn't have come at all—I shouldn't have dreamed of coming down—but my mother wished me to talk to you for ten minutes until she is dressed. Will you sit down?"

"Thanks. I—I suppose you're glad to get home?" he said uncomfortably, looking across at her.

"Oh, yes, very."

"We've heard a good deal about you lately."

She leaned toward him impulsively. "Have you? Has my mother talked of me?"

"Yes. She's been wondering what she's going to do with you."

"Oh!"

So long a pause ensued that Priscilla finally hurled herself into the breach. "You're the first great person I've ever met, so I don't know what to say to you."

"I? I'm not a great person. If I were, I'd know what to say to you. I don't get on with girls—they frighten me."

"Are you frightened now? If you're half as frightened as I am, don't you think I might go tell mother that we couldn't talk?"

He looked at her and laughed. "I'd hate to confess to your mother that I was afraid of anything."

"Oh, you're that way, too, are you?"

"Your mother isn't afraid of anything."

"No, I suppose not."

"She'd laugh at us."

"Yes, she always laughs at things."

Again he glanced at her. "I suppose you liked it at school?"

"No."

"Oh, is that so? Why didn't you?"

"It would take four years to really tell you."

He laughed. "We'd better postpone it, then, for it's rather near dinner-time."

"Besides, I couldn't tell you, anyhow—you wouldn't understand."

"You don't think much of my intellect, then?"

"Oh, I think you're very great, but I don't think you could understand just a plain girl—like me."

Mrs. Martin came in, and he went to meet her, half-way across the room.

"Why, what's the matter?" he said.

"Mother, may I be excused? I'm a little tired—I——"

"By all means, Priscilla. Dinner at seven-thirty."

"Yes, mother. Good afternoon, Mr. Drake."

He bowed silently, then turned to Mrs. Kaley Martin.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked again.

"Don't ask me. I've been through the hardest half-hour of my life."

"You mean?"

"Did you ever hear of people being transformed in an hour? That's what's happened to me. What did you think of her? Is she a beauty?"

"I don't know—I didn't notice. But never mind her—let us talk of you. What is this change you talk about? What did she do to you?"

"She swamped me in a sea of emotions; she tugged me hither and thither, where I didn't want to go; she put her hands ruthlessly on old wounds and opened them up again; she arraigned me before the past, and, worst of all, she loves me."

"What a strange woman you are, Louise! Didn't you want her to love you?"

"I wanted her to be fond of me; but love—there are such terrible obligations in being loved!"

"I've come to talk to you about love, myself."

"Don't—I can't bear anything more to-night. You are to stay to dinner, Tony, and protect me. You must keep that child's unblinking eyes off me, you

must be the safety-valve, or I shall do something insane."

"Very well," he said quietly, "my case can wait, and to-night we'll attend to the case of Priscilla—that's her name, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's her name—Priscilla. And to think that we counted on the chance that her coming home would make no difference!"

"Possibly you exaggerate your problem just now."

"Tony, it takes the most finished diplomat years to prepare himself to face a situation of half the vitalness of this one of mine; and I've thrown away all my years of preparation!"

CHAPTER III.

"Well, Priscilla, how have you put in the morning?" asked Mrs. Martin, kissing her daughter's cheek as she sat down to the luncheon-table.

"Pretty well—but it's been rather long," the girl admitted. "I've arranged all the flowers, and settled my things in my room, but it didn't take quite all the time. Couldn't I have some regular morning things to do, mother, so I'd feel more settled here?"

"My dear, your regular morning thing to do will be to sleep, as soon as you get started socially. We must look over your clothes and get Madame Sonci started on some new gowns, and that will take time. We'll keep you busy enough, never fear."

"Thanks. You see, I'm used to being busy. At school we had things to do every hour of the day, so it's pretty hard to drift."

"Yes, I suppose you'll miss it—the routine life, and your friends, and all. We might ask some of the girls to visit you—would you like that? Who was your best friend?"

Priscilla hesitated. "Well, I don't know that I really had one. I didn't go about with the other girls very much; I always had my—I always spent my time with——"

"Well, with whom?"

"I'd rather not tell you, if you don't mind."

"You'd rather not tell? Why, what do you mean, Priscilla? Who was this mysterious companion?"

"Please don't laugh, mother—it was just somebody I pretended."

"Your best friend was somebody you pretended?" repeated Mrs. Martin curiously.

Priscilla nodded.

"What a strange child you are! Didn't you like the girls?"

"Oh, yes—some of them. But if you just pretend your best friend, she's always with you, and she never says mean, spiteful things, nor hurts your feelings, nor laughs at you——"

Mrs. Martin smiled—but it was a winning smile, instead of her habitual satiric one. "It has obvious advantages—you could shut her out when she bored you."

"Oh, but she never bored me!"

"Really? She *must* have been pretended. I shall ask Mr. Drake to take you in hand—we may make a great novelist of you."

"I liked him. I wasn't a bit afraid, after the first."

"I told you he was harmless. Did he talk to you?"

"At first he was annoyed at my being there, but I told him I only came because I was sent, so then he talked to me, just to be polite."

"He doesn't usually take the trouble."

"I wished he wouldn't. I liked him better when he was quiet. It wasn't stupid quiet; it was just *quiet* quiet."

"My conscience, Priscilla! I'm almost afraid you're clever!" said Mrs. Martin, rising.

"Oh, no, I'm not. I'm sorry if I've talked too much."

"Nonsense! You've quite amused me, and I've been bored to death all morning."

"Oh, I'm glad!"

"Now, what do you want to do this afternoon? I'm going to drive to town to do some errands, and I've asked a few people in to tea at five to meet you. Now, will you come with me, or do you want to amuse yourself until five?"

"If you don't mind, I'll take Mary and go to the park and skate."

"Skate? Mercy! Isn't it too cold?"

"It's just right. You don't mind, then?"

"Of course not—only, be back at five."

"All right, Madame Mother," she called, as she flew up-stairs.

Mrs. Martin stood watching her. "What a baby she is!" she mused. "And rather an amusing baby, too."

"Peter," said Mrs. Martin, looking at him sternly, "I relied on your tact and judgment, and they have played me false."

"Say not so, fair lady; what shall the owner do to redeem them?"

Mrs. Martin shook her head. "I knew it would come, and I hoped it wouldn't. I am relegated to the position of the mother of my daughter. The Parson, here, comes to my tea-party, and even while he inquires for my health, his eye wanders and he says: 'Where is she?' Nan, here, blows in upon us and ignores us all, demanding: 'Where's your girl?' And now you—my erstwhile slave of the lamp—find me inadequate!"

"Stuff, Louise!" broke in Mrs. Crompton. "You asked us here for a private exhibition of your latest, and we want to see whether it is a signed proof or a copy."

"We hope it is a copy," said The Parson gallantly.

"Well, my exhibit has gone skating, under strict orders to return at five, and, my dears, it is an original, not a copy."

"Humph! I don't care much for girls myself. Boys are more my style," quoth Mrs. Crompton.

"Thanks," said Peter, offering her tea.

"Oh, you! Peter, you're a perennial youth, like Cupid. You've been the boy wonder of society for ten years."

"Spare me!" cried the victim, on his knees at once, hands raised.

"Pick on some one your own age, Nan," interposed Mrs. Martin.

"I can't—they're all dead."

"In the person of old age, I offer myself as victim, Mrs. Crompton," said The Parson, sitting down beside her.

Peter returned to Mrs. Martin and the tea-table. "Where's Tony?" he asked.

"I don't know—he'll probably turn up later, but I never depend on him."

"Idiosyncrasies of genius, I suppose."

"No, just a Tonyism. It is one of the things that make him interesting."

"Ah, do you mind if I jot that down? Be unreliable and you will be interesting. If any man could be all that the world thinks Tony to be, he'd be the only living world-wonder in captivity."

"You're jealous, Peter."

"I am. I think the whole world runs mad on celebrities. When every third man is a celebrity, why isn't it a distinction to be a commonplace man, like me?"

"You're not commonplace enough; you're—Peter."

The door opened at this juncture, and Priscilla entered. "Oh, mother, I'm so sorry to be late!" she began impulsively, and then stopped.

"Great Jupiter!" said Peter, and they all sat and looked at her.

She certainly was a charming vision, this red-cheeked, bright-eyed Priscilla, in her close-fitting blue velvet skating-suit, setting off her slimness, and Mrs. Martin admitted, with unexpected pride, that this was Priscilla at her best.

"Come in, wicked one," she said, holding out her hand to the girl, suddenly very shy. "This is Priscilla, everybody. This is Mrs. Crompton, this is The Parson, and this is—Peter."

"Last but not least—Peter," reiterated that gentleman, bowing.

"How do you do?" said Priscilla gravely.

"Mercy, Louise! why didn't you tell us she was a beauty? You've no right to spring it on us like this."

Mrs. Martin smiled down at the girl. "Priscilla, Mrs. Crompton thinks you're a beauty," she said, in experiment.

"I'm afraid she's making fun of us, mother," the girl answered simply, and turned away.

"Pour yourself some tea, dear, and

talk to Peter. But be careful—Peter's very young."

Priscilla obediently took her seat at the table and poured her tea.

"I hope you won't think me too young to be noticed, Miss Martin," said Peter, watching her.

"Are you so very young?" she asked, looking at him directly. "You don't look it."

He laughed. "Thanks—I'm not, really. But I live under that constant curse of eternal youth, due to pink cheeks and curly hair."

"Oh, I see."

"But in spite of it I'm a very nice sort of a chap, and I hope you'll like me."

"I hope so."

"Your mother and Mrs. Crompton will recommend me, I'm sure."

"What's that, Peter? I heard my name. What scandal are you telling that child about me?"

"Miss Martin, I appeal to you—was it a scandal?"

"It may be—he says you recommend him."

This shot was greeted with much laughter, and Mrs. Martin inspected her daughter with surprise. What a combination of naïveté and ease!

"Don't let him mislead you, my dear," Mrs. Crompton said; "he's a whited sepulcher, and there are people who think he uses rouge."

"I think poor Schuyler has been punished enough this afternoon," said The Parson, coming over to Priscilla.

"Poor Peterkin! Come over here and sit on my lap," said Mrs. Martin.

Peter and The Parson exchanged places.

"We're very glad to welcome you home, Miss Priscilla," said The Parson, in his genial way.

"Thank you, I'm glad to be home," she answered.

"I suppose it is quite a marked change from the schoolroom to such an atmosphere as this."

"Yes, it is, and I don't know what they're talking about at all; do you?"

He looked at her smilingly. "Not always. You see, their idea is to talk in

such a manner as to hide what they really think, and you and I regard conversation as a means of expressing our thoughts."

"I suppose that's it. I hope I'll get used to it, but it makes me afraid just now."

"You needn't be. If the thoughts are worth revealing, I think our way is the best. What shall you do with yourself?"

"Mother is going to introduce me soon."

"Dear, dear! What a pity! Now, that's the old-fashioned part of me, and the new-fashioned part says: 'What a fine time you'll have!' But I always regret that that mother of yours wastes her brain on social frippery; but there—she's made Drake, and that will stand as her epitaph."

"Made him? How?"

The Parson hemmed a little uncertainly. "Well, the story goes that your mother discovered Drake's genius, saved him from himself, and made him what he is."

"How splendid!" cried Priscilla, her eyes shining.

"What's splendid?" broke in Mrs. Crompton, looking at them.

"Don't tell her," said Priscilla impulsively.

"Why, Priscilla!" Mrs. Martin interposed.

"Faith, and why shouldn't he tell me?" inquired Mrs. Crompton.

"Because you'll laugh, and I don't want you to."

Priscilla appealed to her mother, flushed and miserable. "I beg your pardon," she said then.

"Priscilla has not yet acquired social tact," Mrs. Martin explained.

"Priscilla still dares to speak the truth," The Parson substituted. "Let her alone; she'll soon learn better."

"I never heard you preach before," laughed Mrs. Crompton.

"Some day I shall take for my text 'Laughs and Scoffers,' and then, Mrs. Crompton, beware!" he added lightly.

Drake was announced.

"Come in—do. We're about to have a sermon from The Parson. 'Parlor

Talks by a Prominent Parson!" cried Mrs. Crompton.

"How do you do?" said Drake to Mrs. Martin, who stood smilingly by, watching the encounter. He bowed to the rest, and his eye hovered a moment about Priscilla, who blushed furiously.

"No doubt the sermon is needed," he replied to Mrs. Crompton's fling. "What's the text?"

"Laugh not—that ye be not laughed at!" said Peter.

The Parson took him up. "That does very well—there is obvious need of a protest. We laugh at everything—political juggling, moral intriguing, business dishonesty, they all amuse us—as part of a game. It is the crying evil of our day—to shrug the shoulders and to laugh."

"That's the text of my next book, Parson," Drake said. "Mrs. Martin really suggested it in something she said once, about how we moderns shift responsibilities—from personal to national ones——"

"Louise ought to make a good agitator—she's had hers away at school," Mrs. Crompton put in.

"I say, that's a mean shot!" cried Peter.

"It's always unwise to sail too close to a personality, don't you think, Mrs. Crompton?" said Drake. "It always stimulates curiosity about one's own practises."

"Well, I haven't any principles, and my practises are scandalous, so I've a perfect right to cast the first stone."

"You're behaving very badly, Nan," Mrs. Martin said. "There's no vestige left of the spiritual quality."

"It's useless to encourage illusions about yourself in other people's breasts, don't you think so, Parson?" she demanded.

"Illusions are so often safeguards, Mrs. Crompton. Even the best of us like a little haze between the observer and our innermost selves."

"If you weigh nearly two hundred, as I do, there is quite a thick haze between the observer and your innermost self," murmured Peter softly.

"Oh!" said Priscilla in protest.

The Parson smiled, turning to her. "My dear, they're all sick of this disease save you and me. We must be very careful or we'll catch it."

He offered his hand to Mrs. Martin. "I must run along," he said. "I'm delighted to have met the daughter, and I think"—here he took Priscilla's hand—"I think we are going to be great friends."

"Thank you," said the girl gratefully.

"Parson, if you can put up with me for ten minutes longer, I'll drop you at the parsonage," Mrs. Crompton said.

"Charmed."

"I want to try to reinstate the illusions," she explained. "Hope you aren't determined not to like me," she said to Priscilla. "Bring her around for tea, Louise. Adieu, Tony. Ta-ta, Peter."

Upon their exit, Peter once more joined Priscilla. "We've made a bad impression on you, haven't we?" he said.

"No, only I'm stupid, and I don't know how to talk to you," she answered frankly, as he sat down beside her.

"Why so abstracted?" said Mrs. Martin to Drake.

"I'm not. I came to ask you to marry me."

"Tony! What do you mean?"

"Just that. I've tried to do it twice before and been interrupted, and I want to get it settled."

"Oh, but not here and now!"

"Why not?"

"With Peter and Priscilla here, and all."

"Well, they can't hear us; they seem quite absorbed."

"But, Tony, it's like proposing in a street-car—it's *so* unromantic!"

"Oh, well, if you come to that, I *am* unromantic, and no one knows it better than you."

"No, no one does."

"Why not settle it right here, then, and be done with it? I've been thinking over your idea of going abroad, and it seems a good one. We can go somewhere in Italy for June——"

"Are you asking me because you love me, Tony, or because you need me?"

"Why, both."

"Oh, you only mentioned one, you know."

"I thought you understood me well enough to know that I can't do this sort of thing like a *matinée* hero; but I do want and need you more than anything else in the world, Louise."

"I suppose it is thoroughly like a woman to want you to say: 'I love you better than anything on earth.'" She rose. "I want to think it over, Tony; you'll have to give me time."

He rose, too, a trifle annoyed and quite surprised. "Of course, but—"

"You're in a hurry to make your plans? I understand. Peter, you must go now, unless you'll stay on to dinner. We have to dress."

"Mark how she speeds the parting guest! Are you dismissed, too, Tony?"

"I think I am," Drake replied ruefully.

"Say a good word for me to Miss Priscilla," Peter said in parting. "She thinks I'm unregenerate."

"I don't know what that means," said Priscilla gravely.

"Well, don't learn," Drake said, and bowed his farewell.

CHAPTER IV.

Outside, the carriage doors closed with an unrelenting bang-bang-bang, and the crowd of guests hurried on past the idle crowd of onlookers, up the stairs to the dressing-rooms, whence later it merged itself into the stream flowing into the ballroom.

It seemed to Priscilla as if the whole world was marching up to her, shaking her by the hand, greeting her monotonously, and passing on again. She stood beside her mother, very straight, her head up, her face flushed, determined not to disgrace this glorious mother of hers, no matter what the cost. But it seemed strange to her that any one could think this clatter and crowding pleasant.

Her thoughts flew back to the little school dances which constituted her

idea of social events, when the girls with handkerchiefs tied about their arms were the only men; then she looked about her at the beautiful ballroom—a dazzle of lights—the brilliant throng that moved about it, and men—there were apparently thousands. She glanced up at her mother, who was fairly radiant to-night, and recalled Mrs. Crompton's remark in passing: "You may call it your swan-song, if you like, Louise, but it's the best song I ever heard you sing!" Whatever it meant, her mother had laughed gaily.

"I don't often go to balls, Miss Priscilla," said a familiar voice, "but I couldn't resist the temptation of coming to yours."

"Oh, goody!" she cried impulsively as she came out of her dream to find The Parson shaking her hand.

The Parson and Mrs. Martin laughed.

"Priscilla's flattery is direct," said Mrs. Martin. "Suppose you take her along and get her a cup of coffee, Parson; the poor child's tired to death already. I think every one is here. The cotillion is at ten, you know."

"Won't you go in my place, mother?"

"Mercy, no, child, I'm used to it! You run along."

"Come along, and make me the proudest man here," said The Parson, offering his arm.

"I wish to tell you once again that never in your life have you looked so 'gorjoose,'" murmured Peter to Mrs. Martin, as he joined her.

"It helps greatly, Peter, thank you," she answered. "Priscilla is in the dining-room with The Parson, so when you want to start things go and get her."

"The Parson? Why didn't you let me take her to the dining-room?"

"You have privileges enough. The Parson can't dance the cotillion with her, you know."

"Drat the Parson!" said Peter, hurrying on.

Some other people held Mrs. Martin's attention for a time, and when they passed on Drake was beside her.

"So you decided to come?"

"Yes, I didn't want to hurt the little girl's feelings."

"Oh, I thought perhaps you came to see me."

"I did."

"Well, you're just in time to lead me away to the other end of the ballroom. It is time for Peter to get people seated. Isn't it a nice party, Tony?"

"Yes, great," he answered, as if he had just noticed that it *was* a party. "Where is your little girl?"

"Gone to get some coffee with The Parson. How do I look, Tony?"

"You look fine," he answered promptly—much too promptly.

"Tony, Tony, what am I going to do with you?" she objected despairingly.

"Marry me, I hope," he replied.

Mrs. Martin overlooked this entirely. "Wait until you see Priscilla, and then you'll think I look like old Aunt Sadie from the country."

He laughed and looked at her, in the full bloom of her womanhood, brilliant, beautiful, perfectly poised, and began to voice his protest at her gibe, when suddenly he stopped and looked straight ahead, as if at a vision. The stream of people following stopped, too, and looked. At the far end of the room, two steps above the level of the ballroom floor, there was a door leading into the dining-room, which had been twined with vines and roses, and there, poised a minute before she descended, stood Priscilla, in her white tulle gown, her eyes shining, and the light on her yellow hair making an aureole about her head—Priscilla, like an artist's ideal of youth.

"Elaine, the Lily-maid," Drake murmured, half to himself. Then the moment passed, Peter led Priscilla into the room, the music began, and Mrs. Martin pulled herself together sharply.

"She's very lovely to-night, isn't she?"

"Yes," said Drake.

"She had twenty-two bouquets, and she chose to carry yours. It was sweet of you to send lilies of the valley, Tony, and so significant—the violets for me!"

"She is carrying my flowers," Drake repeated.

"We *both* are," she answered, pointing to her own corsage.

"I am very proud," he said.

"Mother, Mr. Schuyler thinks we'd better begin. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Drake? I'm *so* glad you came."

"Thank you," he said, looking at her intently.

"I'm frightened to death, mother. If it wasn't for Mr. Peter, I couldn't possibly do a thing."

"Priscilla, you're getting on," said her mother. "Go ahead, Peter. I'm dancing with Colonel Bracken—ah, here he is now. Sorry you don't dance, Tony. Go make yourself agreeable to some other old lady!"

The dance began, and Drake betook himself to a vantage-point and watched the throng. Quite unconsciously, his attention concerned itself with the two figures, mother and daughter, that dominated the scene. Priscilla blew about the room like a bit of thistledown, a white butterfly, as he put it to himself, while Mrs. Martin, regal, imperious, directed and managed it all, as ever, the power and motive force. As the evening wore on he wandered about, smoked, talked, and came back to his comparisons. As he stood watching, after an elaborate figure, he saw Mrs. Martin go to Priscilla and say a word, and then Priscilla, after an apparent moment of hesitation, came to him.

"Mr. Drake, mother is going to lead this figure, and I'm to rest. Will you take me away for a bit? I won't have to talk to you," she added, as she took his arm and led him to a seat in the music-room.

"Are you having a good time?" he asked, looking down at her.

"Oh, splendid!" she answered. "I'd no idea coming out was like this. It's such fun, and everybody is so nice, and Peter—I mean Mr. Schuyler—dances grandly!"

"You don't tell me! I have never had my attention called to Peter's grandeur before."

"I think he's fine, don't you?"

"Yes—but let's talk about you instead of Peter."

"Oh, that's the trouble with me—there's never anything to say about me. Doesn't mother look lovely?" she added, catching sight of her as she passed the door.

"Yes, she does. She always does."

"Yes, but not always like to-night. I think people have heights of looks, like heights of happiness, don't you?"

"Do they? I'm afraid I don't notice those things much."

"No, I don't think you do—it shows in your books."

"Oh, does it?"

"Yes, you never make any one want to see your heroines, because you never care anything about seeing them yourself."

He laughed. "What do you know about my heroines?"

"I know all about them. I've read all your books."

"Poor child! I feel for you."

"Now, don't you do it, too."

"Do what?"

"Laugh at me."

"Forgive me—I won't ever again."

How did you happen to read my things?"

"Well, I found 'The Soul of Ignace' in Paris, and I liked that pretty well, so I got the others. 'The Soul of Ignace' is the best thing you've done."

"I agree with you. It was written when I had the most to say."

"Were you Ignace?"

A dark flush mounted Drake's face, and burnt itself out in his hair. It might have been anger or embarrassment or shame. "Yes," he answered finally.

"I thought so."

"No one ever dared to ask me that before," he added.

"Perhaps no one ever guessed," she said.

"Your mother knows," Drake confessed.

"Oh, mother—she knows everything. Isn't she wonderful?"

"She's the most wonderful woman I know."

"I'm so glad you think so, too. You

see, I've never had any one to talk to before about mother—any one who would understand, I mean."

He nodded.

"I don't know why I chatter along this way to you."

"I like it," he said simply. "Your mother has played the most important part in my life of any one who has ever come into it."

"Has she? How?"

"I can't tell you—but she came and hauled me up out of the mire and made a man of me."

"I'm so glad mother did that. You see, I used to feel badly sometimes because she never let me stay with her, but all those years she was helping you, and that was better worth while than just helping me."

"I'm not so sure of that. Perhaps you could have given her more in return than I ever can."

"Oh, well, I should always love her just the same, no matter what she did—she's so wonderful. I don't see how I ever happened to belong to her."

Mrs. Martin appeared at the door. "Come along, Lady-bird; it's my time to rest now. Oh, Tony—you're here, are you? Take her along back, and then come and talk to me."

"Shall I send you in some coffee, mother?"

"No, thanks."

Mrs. Martin leaned back and closed her eyes. She was glad of the quiet. Priscilla's ball was a great success, but it had been a strain, and she was tired. She almost envied Priscilla her thrills; but there—she wanted her girl to drink the pleasure of it to the full. How she was stealing into her heart and interest, with her honest eyes and her unexpressed adoration!

"Oh, no, he won't—at least, I hope he won't. It would ruin his chances of greatness if he married Louise," came Mrs. Crompton's clear voice from the other side of the divan. "He ought to marry the daughter—he needs just such a spontaneous young thing to stir him up. He's twisted Louise's mind dry of all ideas; and, then, she's too old for him. He doesn't care for society,

of course"—the voice dwindled off as the couple disappeared again.

Mrs. Martin sat there as if carved in stone. "He ought to marry the daughter—he's twisted Louise's mind dry of all ideas—she's too old for him"—she went over it and over it. How often she had said that Nan Crompton's tongue went to the heart of things, like a surgeon's knife to the seat of a disease. Was she right now? Had she played her part in Tony's life, and must she march on now and give her place to—

"Here I am—why, what's the matter, Louise?" he asked in quick alarm.

"Nothing. Why?"

"You look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"I have."

He took her hand with rare tenderness. "You're overdoing lately. Why don't you let me take you away?"

"I can't. You remember what we were saying the other day about shifting responsibility, and how Nan Crompton hit the nail on the head by saying that I kept my responsibility in school while I preached?"

"Odious woman!"

"But it was the truth, Tony, and now I want to make it up to Priscilla—a little. I'm finding out that the shirked responsibilities are coming back to me doubled."

"She's been talking to me about you to-night. She seems to adore you."

"I know, and I think I'm going to love her better than I have ever loved anything in my life. I think, perhaps, I am going to give her the thing I hold most dear."

"Oh, I don't think you're called on to do that," he said lightly.

"Do you think her very sweet, Tony?"

"Yes, and interesting, too—strangely interesting."

"I want you to like her tremendously."

"Of course I'd do that, because she's yours."

"No, I want you to because she's herself."

"When are you going to answer that question I asked you the other night?"

"I don't know. If I answered it to-night, I should say that it can never be."

"Then I won't speak of it again until you wish me to."

"Thanks. I shall not be long, but it takes some time to face the truth fairly and squarely, and give it welcome."

Later, when the house was dark and quiet, Mrs. Martin went to Priscilla's door. The girl sat before the fire, toasting her toes, and at sight of her mother she sprang up joyfully.

"Why, mother, how nice of you to come! Sit down here"—she pushed a big chair up—"and we can talk."

Mrs. Martin let herself be pushed into the chair, and a pillow placed behind her head, then Priscilla sat down cross-legged on the hearth, facing her.

"Wasn't it too lovely, all of it? I'm just trying to begin at the beginning, and remember everything everybody said to me, and how many times I was favored."

Mrs. Martin smiled. "I'm glad you had such a good time. You were a great success, Priscilla. I prophesy that you will be a belle."

"Me a belle? Oh, mother, how could I be?"

"Modesty is a sort of a disease with you, dear."

"I might be just because I'm your daughter, but not because I'm me," she said, leaning her cheek against her mother's hand. She looked very slight and childish in her white gown, her hair about her face.

Mrs. Martin touched a chain she wore about her neck. "What's this?" she said, examining the locket which fell into her hand.

Priscilla flushed. "You wouldn't care to know," she said.

"But I do care. May I look?" Mrs. Martin persisted, suspecting some childish love-affair.

"If you like," Priscilla whispered. "It is the picture of my pretended best friend."

She put her head down, and waited centuries while her mother looked, and then she heard a sob—deep, rending,

like the breaking up of ice long hardened. She was drawn into her mother's arms, and on her face she felt the rain of tears.

CHAPTER V.

"This day is good enough to put away in sweet lavender and keep for always," said Mrs. Martin, lazily swinging in the hammock, her hands locked under her head. "Tony, how did you ever think of having us all down here? It is too lovely!"

"Well, it certainly is time for me to precipitate myself into the social whirl," he answered, smiling; "and you people are witnessing my first feeble strokes."

"This is no feeble stroke," interrupted Peter; "this is a headlong dive. The Associated Press are now, no doubt, has telegraphed the news of this house-party from one end of the civilized globe to the other."

At this point Mrs. Crompton appeared, parasol in hand, followed by The Parson.

"Where are you going?" Drake inquired.

Mrs. Crompton pulled a long face, the corners of her mouth turned down, her wicked eyes turned up. "We are going out into the wilderness," she said, in a muffled voice; "and there the saintly Parson is to read aloud to me from 'Thomas à Kempis'—or is it 'Thomas à Becket'? I never can get them straight. Also he is to read the 'Prayers for the Damned.'"

"How cheerful!" murmured Peter.

They all laughed, including The Parson.

"What are you going to do with the hammock?" demanded Mrs. Martin.

"Sit in it," replied the lady promptly.

"Both of you?" asked Drake.

"Certainly. It can be done with care, you know."

"That," said The Parson, "is our concession to things worldly."

"You've no idea how nice he looks lying at the other end of the hammock, preaching to me. Oh, even conversion

may be made interesting if you just know how to go about it."

"Who's converting whom?" asked Tony.

Mrs. Crompton gave him a dazzling smile. "We're converting each other," she replied. "*En avant*, spiritual pastor and master!"

The Parson held the door open for her, and surveyed their smiling faces, smiling himself. "The only question is, which one wins out first in the conversion," he said.

Mrs. Crompton's laugh floated back to them as they tramped off woodland.

"It really isn't a bad idea—this flirtation of Nan and The Parson," said Mrs. Martin.

"It's all very well for Mary Ann, But a little tough on Abraham,"

quoted Peter. "He's too good a sort for her to make a fool of."

"I'm not so sure she'll succeed there," said Drake. "I think she's met her match."

"Where's Miss Priscilla?" demanded Peter.

"I don't know, I'm sure. She's playing around somewhere," her mother replied. "Priscilla's having a splendid time."

"I'm so glad," Drake said sincerely.

"I'm not," said Peter. "She treats me like a dog." He slammed the screen door after him, and marched off in search of her.

"Do you think Peter is in love with Priscilla?" Mrs. Martin asked idly.

A slow red crept into Drake's face, and a look of utter surprise and consternation engraved itself there. "I don't know—I hadn't thought of it—of course, he must be."

Mrs. Martin turned and looked at him. "It would be only natural, of course. She's such a dear."

"I suppose he's just the sort she would like—jolly and good-looking, and all that."

"I don't know. It's hard to tell just what is going on in that queer little head of hers. I'm constantly surprised at her good sense."

"You're modest."

"Oh, no! I came by mine through hard knocks, but hers is instinctive; and such a power of love as she has packed in her heart—it is alarming!"

"We'll hope Peter is worthy of it."

"I suppose every woman has it—this power of love," she went on; "and the failure or success of her life depends on her getting the right outlet for it."

"The right outlet?"

"I mean the right object. It's a question which is the greater tragedy—to squander your whole treasure of love upon a man who is not worthy, or not to find the man at all, and find this power growing and growing, with no outlet, until it fairly chokes out life, or——"

"Or?"

"To keep it for a man who does not want it."

"Yes, that must be the worst of all. But all that belongs to the romantic age. You and I have gone beyond that. You said it once about Priscilla—'the obligations of being greatly loved'—they so disturb life."

"What do you know about it?" she flung out at him. "You've never loved in all your bloodless life."

"Louise!"

"I mean just that. You've no right to an opinion. You've gone along your way, watching, dissecting emotions, and putting the results in books. Well, what of it? What does that amount to—to you, Anthony Drake, the man? You've never leaped to heights undreamed of, and been flung to depths unthinkable, at the merest look of some one you love."

"Why, Louise, what's come to you? The cold-hearted advocate of things Platonic!"

"Ridiculous, isn't it? I'm making out a case for the other side, you see."

"We're too—too settled, you and I, to consider that side now. Fifteen years ago, perhaps—well, we'll do very well without the demands; we'll go abroad and work together, and come out here sometimes in the summer and loaf. Haven't you nearly decided, Louise?"

"Yes, I have nearly decided that if there is no bread a stone must do."

"Which means?"

"Perhaps some day you'll know, Tony, but I hope not."

Peter, meanwhile, strolled until he was out of sight, and then he started off on what might be called a purposeful quickstep. He searched among the willows, and she wasn't there; he tried the hilltop, and she wasn't there; then, hot and irate, he made for the edge of the river, and nearly stepped on her, lying flat on her stomach in the grass, looking into the depths of the water.

"Well," Peter fairly snorted, "so here you are!"

No reply.

"I've been all over the country looking for you, and I'm nearly dead with heat and anxiety."

"I'm sorry."

"Sorry? You don't know what it means. You wouldn't care a rap if I dropped dead at your feet with sunstroke!"

"Yes, I would. How would I ever get you home?"

He flung himself down dejectedly and watched her. "Why did you give me the slip?"

"I didn't. I just came away to be by myself."

"Oh, if that's the case, perhaps you'd like me to go?"

She considered a moment. "No, I'd just as soon you'd stay—if you won't chatter."

"Humph!"

He relapsed into enforced silence, and she resumed her scrutiny of the water's depths. Shortly she began to speak softly, as if to herself:

"And after awhile the King, who lived in the Palace of Shells, far under the water, grew old and didn't care about anything in the kingdom, so the people threatened to kill him and get a new king. The King went to the Wise Old Woman of the Sea and asked her what to do, and she said that if he could find the Water-Lily Maiden and induce her to give him one drink from

her golden goblet, he would grow young again, and all would be well.

"Whereupon the King sent out his courtiers to the end of the kingdom to find her. He sent water-bugs and fish and snakes, and they all searched in vain. At length the King set forth himself on a prancing dolphin, and he rode to all the countries under the sea, but he found her not; he went to the surface of the water and rode clear round the world, but he found her not; and all the time he was growing older and older, and finally he said to the dolphin: 'Take me home to die.'

"So the dolphin took him homeward, and just as he was about to descend beneath the water, where the Palace of Shells grew, the King spied a clump of water-lilies, and he cried out to them:

"Know ye where the Water-Lily Maiden dwells who holds the golden goblet?"

"And they answered: 'Yes, she lives here in this village.'

"So the King entered the village of Water-Lilies, and there on a lily pad, swaying with the water's ripple, sat the Water-Lily Maid; and when she saw the King she smiled.

"I've been around the whole world twice, once under sea and once atop,' grumbled the King.

"And I've lived beside your door all the time,' she said to him.

"Give me to drink of the golden goblet,' he commanded.

"'Tis only for the wise to drink,' said she. 'One drop gives supreme happiness, two drops satiety, and three drops death.'

"Give it me!' cried the King.

"So she lifted the goblet to his lips, and he drank one drop.

"'Tis sweet!' cried the King.

"Beware!' said the Water-Lily Maiden.

"She raised it again to his lips, and he drank two drops.

"'Tis bitter,' moaned the King.

"Beware!' cried the Water-Lily Maiden.

Eagerly he seized the cup and drank three drops, and then the King fell dead

of too much joy, even at his own threshold."

"What was in the cup?" demanded Peter.

"I don't know," she said.

"Well, I'll tell you," said Peter, with sudden passion. "It was love—love—love! Oh, Priscilla, unless you come to the rescue, I shall drink three drops and die!"

Priscilla sat up and inspected him. "What are you driving at?" she said impatiently.

She looked very young, and Peter felt a thousand years old.

"Priscilla, did you ever hear of love?"

"Of course."

"Do you know what it means?"

She nodded.

"Well, I've got it—I've got it terribly. I'm dying of it."

Her face showed swift concern.

"Dear me! I'm so sorry, Peter."

"Of course I know I'm not good enough for her."

Priscilla leaped to a swift conclusion. "No, you're not."

"No fellow could be. She's the sweetest thing on earth."

"Isn't she?"—warmly.

"But I love her so——"

"Everybody does," said Priscilla promptly.

"Y-e-s, I know," he acknowledged in some surprise.

"Well, then, why on earth should she care most for you? You're too young for her, Peter, and you talk too much, and you act so silly sometimes; and, besides, you just simply couldn't be my father!"

Peter sprang to his feet. "Your father?" he cried. "Your father? Who wants to be your father?"

Priscilla rose, too, and faced him. "I mean that I don't think mother is in love with you."

"Well, what of it? You're the only one I care about."

"Me?"

"Yes, of course."

She blushed furiously. "Oh, Peter!" she gasped. "You don't mean—me? I thought—oh, Peter!"

She ran away into the woods as fast as she could go, and Peter gave chase. At the first turn in the woods she plunged into Drake's arms. He stood quietly and held her until Peter was almost upon them.

"What is it?" he asked softly, but she only burrowed her head into his coat.

"Take me away—take me away from Peter."

"Priscilla, I insist upon being treated seriously," said Peter firmly, approaching her, and paying no attention at all to Drake.

She raised her head and glared at him. "Go away—go away! I never want to see you again!" she cried.

With one groan Peter flung away and disappeared among the trees.

"Now, what's it all about?" said Drake.

"He's been saying such things to me!" she confessed. "I thought all along he meant mother, and I said such awful things back, and then he meant—me!"

"Dear me! I suppose he's in love with you—is he?"

"Don't say it! I hate him—it makes me feel so terrible—and grown up."

The last tragic words came out with a burst of tears, and poor Drake stood in helpless amazement, wondering what to do. Finally he put his arm about her shoulders and drew her to him, and the yellow head went down on his breast, and then, all at once, a new and utterly inexplicable thrill of happiness went through him and left him trembling.

"You're very good," Priscilla sobbed. "I don't feel at all grown up with you."

"Thanks—I don't with you, either. You're all right now. Come along and play, and forget about Peter."

He led her down to the water's edge again, and found her a seat.

"Want some water-lilies?"

She nodded. He sat down, took off his shoes and stockings, and waded in.

"It's great," he said, grinning back at her. "Come on in."

"Lovely! I'll do it!" cried Priscilla,

and jerked off her shoes and stockings, tucked up her skirt, and marched in, with many a squeal of delight.

They made fairy boats of the lilies, and sailed large fleets off to the Islands of the Blest. They laughed and called out to each other like veritable children; and in the midst of things Mrs. Martin appeared on the bank and beheld the spectacle.

"Why, Priscilla Martin," she gasped. "Tony!"

He turned a boyish face to her. "We've just sent off a splendid cargo of poppy seeds and forgetfulness flowers, bound for the Islands of Childhood!"

"Oh, mother," cried Priscilla, "it's such fun! Come in—do."

"No, dear, it is not for old ladies to invite the rheumatism. I've sent my ships from another port—I wonder will our fleets come home again?" she added softly.

CHAPTER VI.

"Priscilla Martin, what on earth have you done to Peter?" asked Mrs. Crompton abruptly, at the lunch-table two days later. "He acts like Death at the feast."

Priscilla cast a sympathetic glance at Peter's solemn face. "I think Peter doesn't feel very well—do you? It's so hot—"

"Hot? Nonsense! It isn't a heat rash that Peter has; it's another disease; isn't it, Peter?"

"You ought to recognize the symptoms," he retorted.

"It isn't right to tantalize," interposed Drake. "Anybody feel up to an automobile ride after lunch?"

"Mercy! Tony, in this heat?" Mrs. Martin protested.

"Coolest place you can find," he said.

"I'd like to go," volunteered Priscilla.

"How about you, Peter?"

"No, thank you."

"Are you going to use The Parson, Mrs. Crompton? If not, I'll take him."

"Take him, and welcome," said she, pushing back her chair; "but don't lead him into mischief."

"That's your prerogative, I suppose," said Peter.

"Exactly. I'll exercise it on you in his absence, Peter, Peter, Pumpkin-eater."

"I think 'I'll wrap the drapery of me couch about me,' and lie down to pleasant dreams," said Mrs. Martin. "It's a fine day to sleep."

So The Parson, Priscilla, and Tony set forth in the machine, Priscilla on the front seat with Tony, and The Parson stretched out in perfect comfort on the roomy back seat.

"Where shall we go?" Tony asked the girl.

"Over there to the sky-line," she answered, pointing to where sky and woodland met.

He smiled and started. They rode swiftly by the rich valley farms which flanked the road on either side, stretching away to the sky, that shut down over the earth like a lid to a huge pot. The air was hot and vibrant with mid-summer noises.

"Things feel sort of at their height," Priscilla said.

"So they are," Drake answered. "In another day or so we're over the edge and down toward fall."

"Too bad things can't ever stay at the height."

"You won't think so ten years from now."

They were silent for awhile, and when Priscilla looked around, The Parson was asleep.

"We're in the Seven League Boots," she said. "We're running away from the Devil to save The Parson."

"Poor Mrs. Crompton! Is *she* the Devil?" Drake laughed.

"Oh, no; I quite like Mrs. Crompton, don't you? She isn't as bad as she acts."

"None of us are—that's the saving grace."

"Let's go faster; I hear the Devil's footsteps."

"It's dangerous," he warned, letting out the machine a little.

"Faster!" she laughed. "I feel his breath on my neck."

He laughed and changed the speed

recklessly to please her. He wanted to feel her close beside him, and to hear the childish laugh of delight.

"Faster! I hear his voice in my ear!"

The machine leaped at his hand like a living thing, and then the inevitable happened. Out into the road a baby toddled from a farmyard. Drake threw on the brake, called out, and tried to turn out. It was so sudden an onslaught that the machine did not respond, and the next thing he knew he lay beside a fence, a cold stream trickling down his face. Something near him groaned, and he sat up quickly and crawled to the heap of clothes lying against the fence. It was Priscilla, and she lay white and still, like a broken flower.

"God!" said Drake, and touched her face weakly.

"Drake! Drake!" called The Parson from somewhere. He turned and beheld the reverend gentleman struggling from under the upturned car, his head appearing unexpectedly among the cushions.

"Drake, if you could get me out I'd be obliged."

Drake tried to drag himself to his feet. "In a moment," he said. "Are you hurt?"

"I don't know—I think not. Where's Priscilla?"

"There!" Drake almost sobbed.

"Is she hurt?" demanded The Parson; renewing his struggle.

"I'm afraid so."

"We haven't killed her, Drake?"

"God forbid!"

He finally dragged himself to the side of the machine and extricated The Parson, who was only shaken up. They went and bent over the girl, who had not moved. The Parson knelt down and listened for her heart-beats. To Drake it was an eon of agony before he nodded.

"It beats faintly," he said. "We must get help. You stay here while I go for the farm people."

He limped off, and Drake sat down, lifted Priscilla's head into his lap, and sat looking down at her. He didn't

touch her, nor speak to her, nor did he mind the steady drip, drip, of blood from his cut head; he just sat and looked at the white face in his lap, and knew what it was to watch joy go; knew what Orpheus felt as Eurydice faded; knew what every man knows who faces the loss of his heart's desire. All the years of his life marched before him—empty-handed because they had not known Priscilla; the years to come approached with bowed heads, for they were not to know Priscilla; and the little present-in-between, where she had blossomed suddenly, like a morning-glory, grew all radiant with her.

Presently The Parson returned with the farmer and his wife, and very gently they lifted her and took her in, Drake following dully. The woman began to work over her, rubbing her hands and dashing water in her face.

"I telephoned Mrs. Crompton that we'd had a slight accident and would be home in an hour. She will have the doctor there."

Drake assented absently. All he cared about was the flutter of those eyelids, so long quiet.

"Let me tie up your head, Drake—it's a bad cut," said The Parson.

Drake pushed him aside and stood by the bed. Slowly, as if creeping back from the dead, Priscilla came to. Her eyes opened at last, and she sighed.

"Thank God!" said Drake; and it was a prayer to which The Parson said, "Amen."

"Mother!" breathed the girl.

"We'll see her presently," said The Parson.

"Where am I?"

"In a farmhouse. The automobile went into a ditch——"

"Oh, yes! The baby?"

"It's all right. We didn't touch it," Tony said.

"You're hurt!"

"It's nothing. Are you better?"

"Yes, yes," she said, and tried to lift her hand to his head, but it hung limp, and she cried out with the pain.

Drake groaned as if it were his own.

"Tie his—head—up," she ordered.

Drake protested.

"Please—Tony," she whispered; and he sat still while The Parson and the farm woman washed and bandaged his wound.

"Don't tell mother—it will frighten her," Priscilla said.

"She knows we've had a slight accident," The Parson explained. "We're going to try to get you home in a wagon, if you think you can be moved."

"Yes, let's go home."

They put a mattress into a farm wagon and made her as comfortable as possible, the Parson sitting at her feet, to keep the rough bed steady, and Drake at her head. The farmer drove slowly and carefully. Every once in awhile Drake swayed with heat and dizziness, but he pulled himself together, and once or twice, when Priscilla groaned, he came back from some other world, it seemed.

"Lie down beside her, Drake. I don't think you can hold out."

"I'll hold out," said Drake.

It seemed hours before the low bungalow came in view; and when they drove up, Drake saw Mrs. Crompton and the doctor in a mist. The doctor and The Parson lifted Priscilla's bed out and took her indoors. At the threshold of the living-room stood Mrs. Martin, pale and frightened. Drake went in and stood before her.

"See what I've done to her," he said.

Mrs. Martin glanced at Priscilla's white face, and then up at the man's hollow eyes and bloody head.

"Tony!" she cried. "Tony—you're hurt!"

She touched his head with her hand, but he threw it off.

"Never mind me," he said roughly. "Look at her."

They carried Priscilla up-stairs and put her on her bed, leaving Mrs. Martin and the doctor there. Drake stumbled down-stairs and into his den, where he could be alone. Once there, he put his head in his hands and groaned: "God! she cannot die, do you hear me? She cannot die!" Over and over he cried out his defiance to the powers of life and death, until it became mechanical.

The door flew open and Peter burst

in, white-eyed and haggard. "Damn you, Drake!" he cried. "Damn you! You've killed her—you've killed her!"

He threw himself down beside the table and burst into tears, but Drake said not a word.

CHAPTER VII.

It was a week later that Mrs. Martin came into the library, where Mrs. Crompton, Drake, Peter, and The Parson were playing bridge.

"How is the patient to-day, Louise?" asked Mrs. Crompton.

"Good news! She's so much better that she's to be brought down-stairs for a couple of hours."

"Really?" said Drake, rising.

"Really?" said Peter, at the same moment on his feet.

Mrs. Crompton laughed as they hastily sat down. "I'm thinking some of jumping off the bridge, in order to work up a little interest in my own case," she said.

"You don't ever let interest in your own case flag," said The Parson.

"Doesn't he do well? I'm going to start a training-school for parsons."

"We'll give you a hand when she's ready to be moved," said Drake.

"Who's ahead this morning?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"The Parson and I are the only ones in our right minds, so it stands to reason we're ahead. Play, Peter."

"Oh, is it my play? Well, what is——" he began absently.

"For pity's sake, Louise, take Peter's hand and let him moon in peace!" snorted Mrs. Crompton, in high dudgeon.

Peter rose, mumbling something about "nagging women"; Mrs. Martin took his place, and the game went on in silence for an hour.

Peter fled, and horrified the gardener by cutting all the lilies ruthlessly and carrying them off to the dining-room, where he assembled all the vases in the house and made the rooms bewilderingly sweet.

"Poor old Peter!" said Mrs. Martin, watching him.

"Hardest attack Peter's had in years. Is she going to take him?" asked Mrs. Crompton.

"Do pay attention," ordered The Parson.

Drake threw down his cards. "We none of us are in the humor. Why bore ourselves this way?"

"None of us' meaning Anthony Drake," snapped Mrs. Crompton. "Peter, those lilies make me sick."

Peter grinned. "That's what I put 'em there for!"

Mrs. Crompton rose peevishly, then laughed. "Do you remember the little boy who was spanked for being so poor in arithmetic, and how he went to the drug-store and asked for a nickel's worth of 'rithmetic pills? I wish somebody would give me a bottle of temper tonic."

"Come and try a dose of ozone," said The Parson.

"All right; come along."

They went out, and Mrs. Martin went up-stairs, leaving Peter and Drake alone together.

"Cigarette?" Drake asked, offering him the box.

"Bliged," answered Peter, lighting up. "Tony, are you in love with Priscilla?"

Drake turned angrily. "What right have you to ask me such a question as that?" he demanded.

"Maybe I haven't the right—but I want to know."

"What difference does it make to you?"

"A good deal. I'm in love with her myself, and I don't suppose I'd have much chance against you."

"Do you think she loves you?"

"I don't know—sometimes I think she does."

Drake squared his shoulders and walked to the door. "You needn't worry about me," he said. "I won't interfere with your chances."

Peter walked to and fro excitedly after Drake's departure. The field was clear, then; Drake was interested in her only as Mrs. Martin's daughter.

"Tony! Oh, Tony!" came a voice from above.

Peter went to the foot of the stairs. "Drake's gone out. Anything I can do?"

"We're ready to come down now. Do you think you could get Priscilla down alone?"

He cleared the steps three at a time. "Try me," he said, and stopped at the apparition of a little figure in a soft white peignoir.

"Hello, Peter!" she said, holding out her hand.

Peter dropped on his knee and kissed her hand. "I'm so glad, I'm so glad!" was all he could manage to say.

"Now, you must get her up very carefully, Peter," said Mrs. Martin. "She mustn't be jiggled at all; and if you should fall down-stairs with her, Peter, I would have you shot."

"Go 'way, lady," murmured Peter. He lifted Priscilla as if she were made of fragile china, and if his progress down the stairs and into the living-room was a trifle slow, one couldn't blame him, for Priscilla's head was on his breast and her arm about his neck. He put her down gingerly on the couch, and looked at her anxiously. "Are you all there?" he asked.

"That was splendid, Peter!" she smiled back. "Just as good as flying."

"I'll take you up and back again, if you like it," he said boyishly.

"Oh, how sweet it is! Aren't the lilies lovely?" she exclaimed.

"Peter did that," said Mrs. Martin, putting another pillow behind her.

"How good you are, Peter! Oh, everybody's been so good, it's almost worth getting hurt!"

"Don't say such a thing, Baby," said Mrs. Martin, kissing her forehead.

"And mother—well, mother has been—has been—mother!" Priscilla added, her eyes shining.

"Isn't she pretty? Doesn't she look fine?" Peter said.

Mrs. Martin smiled. "Peter, I'll leave you on guard for a bit. I've a note to write—"

"God bless you!" said Peter fervently, and hurried her out. He drew up a chair beside the girl's couch. "Do you

know what torture this last week has been to me?" he said.

"I suppose it has been hard for all of you," she replied evasively.

"But, you see, your mother and I love you the most, so we have suffered the most."

"Yes, mother couldn't let me go—this time," she mused.

"Priscilla, have you any idea how I love you?"

"Oh, Peter, I don't want you to love me! Won't you please ~~not~~?"

"You don't care at all?"

"I care a great deal, Peter dear, but—"

"Don't say the 'but,' please. Do you think you ever could care? I know I'm not much, but if you cared about me, Priscilla, I've been thinking what a lot I could do with myself to make more of a man for you. I'd go to work, and—and—"

"Oh, Peter, don't; please don't!" Priscilla put her head down on her arm.

"I'm a brute to worry you now with it, Priscilla. Never mind about it, dear. Are you *crying*?"

Mrs. Martin, entering, stopped at the door. "Why, Baby! Peter—what's the matter with you children?"

Peter turned away and left them, and Mrs. Martin took Priscilla in her arms.

"The idea of his getting you all excited like this! I could spank him! What's he been saying to you, Lady-bird?"

"He wants me to love him, and I can't; and I don't want him to love me, and he does," sobbed Priscilla.

"Dear me! What a tragedy!" said Mrs. Martin, kissing her hair. "Peter will recover."

Priscilla regarded her gravely. "You don't think it's my duty to marry him, do you, mother? He said that if I did it would make a new man of him, and he'd go to work—"

"My dear, if it was your duty to marry all the men who need your saving touch, this would be a shocking world. Peter's heart will get itself together again, so if you don't want him, send him about his affairs."

"Oh!" sighed Priscilla. "I'm so glad it's not my duty."

"Hello, there!" cried Mrs. Crompton, swooping down upon them. "How is our heroine?" She kissed Priscilla warmly. "It's fine to have you down, and to note the decorative touch to the room once more."

"Where's The Parson?" asked Priscilla, smiling.

"I had to leave him in the garden to recover his wounded dignity."

"What have you done to him, Nan?" Mrs. Martin inquired.

"My dears, would you believe it?—he tried to kiss me out in the garden!"

"Oh, dear!" cried Priscilla in horror. Mrs. Martin laughed.

"Now, it's one thing to be kissed by a beau in the moonlight," Mrs. Crompton continued; "but by a Parson in broad daylight, out in the garden—why, it's a scandal!"

"Are you going to spoil everything for my Parson, Mrs. Nan?" demanded the girl.

"I can't say—it looks a little like it," Mrs. Crompton answered. "But don't you worry about him, Pussy-cat," she added. "Any man, be he parson or prodigal, can take care of himself in affairs of the heart."

She picked up a magazine, nodded to them, and went out on the porch. Mrs. Martin gave Priscilla her book, and then went and threw herself down on the couch at the end of the room, behind the grand piano. All was silent for a while, and then the door slammed, and Priscilla looked up to see Drake at the door of the living-room. A lightning-like change went over his face, and he took two quick steps toward her.

"Priscilla!" he said breathlessly. "Priscilla!"

She half rose, and held out both her hands. In a moment he was beside her, on his knees, her hands held close to his face and lips, and last of all crushed to his breast.

"Oh!" said Priscilla, striving to free the moment from its weight of emotion. "I was wondering where you were."

"Priscilla, you're well again—you're

well again!" he said, with a thrill in his voice that made her wince.

"Yes, I'm all right again; are you?"

"Oh, yes; it didn't matter about me. But you'll never know what it meant to me to think that perhaps I'd hurt you for good and all. Oh, you'll never know!"

"But it was all my fault. I made you go faster and faster. I ought to have suffered, because I was so wickedly silly."

"No, I was the one who had the responsibility in hand, and just to please you I took the risk. I ought to have been killed for it," he finished bitterly.

She drew her hands away and shook her head. "It's all over now, so let us never speak of it again."

He sat down beside her, and she threw herself into conversation. "It's fine to be down again, and everybody's been so good! Peter carried me down—oh, so carefully!"

"Oh, yes, Peter. Where is he?"

"He's gone," she said simply.

He leaned toward her eagerly. "Priscilla, did you send him away?"

"Why, I—yes—that is—"

He breathed deeply and rose. "Thank Heaven!" he said softly; then: "You're tired—we're all exciting you."

"Well, I am tired," she admitted. "I suppose I'm not as strong as I thought I was."

He picked up her book, open on her lap, and began to read aloud softly. She smiled her thanks, and lay back on her pillow, watching him. His strong, lean face showed signs of the past week of anxiety, and a new softness had found place there. His voice went on and on, and then she lost track. Tony looked up and saw that she was asleep. He closed the book over his finger, and sat and looked at her—drank in the freshness of her—knew an abandon of feeling that he'd never known before.

There was a movement from behind the piano, and he turned and faced Mrs. Martin. Not the Mrs. Martin who thirty minutes before had thrown herself down there, but an old, white-faced, haggard Mrs. Martin, whose dry lips refused to speak. She came slowly

and stood beside Priscilla, looking down at her; then she looked at the man, who stood waiting.

"You love her?" she said simply.

"Yes," he answered; "I love her."

Mrs. Martin leaned over and kissed the sleeping girl, then she went out of the room, swiftly, as one struck with age.

CHAPTER VIII.

The next night Mrs. Martin put the last touches to Priscilla's room to make it comfortable for the night, put out the light, and leaned over to kiss the girl good night. Priscilla threw her arms about her neck and drew her down to her passionately.

"Lie down beside me a little, mother, and let's talk," she said.

Without a word Mrs. Martin obeyed, kissing the hand that smoothed her face and brow.

"Mother, do you remember how sorry you were when I came home to stay? How you didn't want me?"

"Yes, I remember."

"But now you do want me, don't you, mother?" She slid into the circle of her mother's arms, sure of her welcome.

"Yes, sweetheart, now I want you. You are making up to me for a great many barren years."

"Mother, you never speak about my father. Did you love him?"

"No, not after the first six weeks of living with him," she admitted bitterly. "That's the reason I didn't want you. I suppose you were a reminder. Not that that excuses my neglect," she added.

"I don't mind now. Of course I hate to think of all those years we missed together; but I loved you so, that if you'd never cared at all, it would have made no difference in my feeling."

"I am the one who has lost, dear—all your sweet freshness, your new interests, your revivifying youngness. I shall have to make up for my wilful loss in the years to come."

The arms clung closer in the darkness. "You love me enough to make

me your friend now, don't you, mother?"

"Of course, dear."

"Could you tell me what it is that has come to you these last two days?"

Mrs. Martin stirred uneasily. "Come to me?"

"Yes; all day to-day and yesterday I've felt as if something has gone out—a light in you, mother—I don't know how to say it."

"I have not been well to-day; the strain and anxiety of the week has told on your old lady mother."

Priscilla felt that her question had been evaded. "'Old lady mother'! My most beautiful lady!" she protested. "Mother, I want to ask you about Mr. Drake."

"Well, dear, what of him?"

"You like him very much, don't you?"

"Yes, I like him very much, Priscilla."

"The Parson told me, when I first came home, that you made Mr. Drake."

"That's absurd, dear. No one makes a great man; he's born."

"But you helped him?"

"Yes, I helped him."

"I thought at first that perhaps you cared for each other."

Mrs. Martin turned her head on the pillow as if it burned her. "We did—we do—we care for each other greatly; we're fast friends," she said, trying to be casual.

"Yes, I see now that it was only that, but I thought at first—it seemed as if he must want you for always, to help in his work."

"He doesn't need me any longer for his work."

"But it doesn't seem fair for you to have helped him to be great, and then that—that some one else should have his life when he is great."

"That's the way of the world, Priscilla."

"Mother, he says he loves me. I don't know what to do." She clung to her mother as if she faced some great danger.

"Do you love him, Priscilla?"

"I don't know. I think he's the most

wonderful person I know—next to you."

"He asked you to marry him?"

"Yes; he wants me to go abroad with him."

Mrs. Martin caught her breath painfully. "And you said?"

"I'm not sure just what I said, but I remember I told him I couldn't possibly go away without you."

Mrs. Martin laughed harshly.

"So he said we'd take you, too, of course."

The woman got up and went to the window and flung the curtain high, and put her hand to her throat, as if she choked. Presently she turned and said quietly:

"That was very sweet of you both, but, of course, I couldn't go."

"Then I won't. I don't want to think of it, anyway."

"But you must think of it, you must think of it," Mrs. Martin repeated, coming to sit on the edge of the bed. "It is not as it was with Peter; this is the treasure of a mature man, hoarded long and grown heavy with concealment. You must not tamper with Tony's love. If you want it take it; if not, you must let him go."

"But, mother, how could I fill his life? Little, stupid me married to that great man! Suppose he should get tired of me; suppose he should expect me to help him the way you did, and I couldn't! I'd die of the shame of it."

"He's offered you his love; never mind about anything else."

"He frightened me so! He's so quiet usually, but to-day he was—he was like somebody else; somebody fierce and breathless and frightened."

Mrs. Martin sat still several moments before she spoke. "This experience has come into his life late, to make or mar it. It is a terrible responsibility for the woman, Priscilla, but I know you are equal to it, if you love him."

"You think it would be a good thing for him to marry?"

"I think it is a tremendous thing for him to love!"

"Mother, do you want me to marry him?"

Silence.

"Do you, mother?"

Mrs. Martin went to the window again, and came back. "I want the happiness of you two people more than anything on earth. If it is to come to you through each other, then I want to see you married."

"If you'd like it, mother, I'll marry him."

"You must be sure of yourself, Priscilla. It would be very terrible if a child of mine should fail him," she added, half to herself.

"Oh, I want so to please you both, mother—you and him. You are the two people I admire the most. But I don't see how I could bear it to go away from you. We'll all have to live together, won't we?"

"We'll see, dear, when the time comes. I think I'll go now—I'm a little tired." She gathered the girl into her arms and kissed her tenderly. "I hope this man may bring all the happiness to you, my girl, that I haven't brought, and I hope you'll give all the happiness to him that I couldn't bring," she added softly.

"Oh, mother, don't—it makes me cry. It's just as if you were saying good-by to something."

"It's sort of good-by to my little girl."

"No, no—not for a long time yet."

"Good night, sweet one."

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Crompton tiptoed down the hall to the top of the stairs, and there she met The Parson, also tiptoeing. She laughed, nodded, and offered him her hand, which he promptly kissed. Together they slipped down the stairs silently.

"Mercy!" said Mrs. Crompton. "Isn't it creepy at this hour? I never was up so early in my life."

"It's fine," he answered; "you have room to breathe. Now, here's the fishing-tackle, the poles, and the bait, and I've got a few sandwiches, in case we're late getting in. You might take the poles."

"Yes, I suppose it would be civil, but I must say I do hate to carry things, and I feel sort of sickly within. I think I'm going to regret this."

"Not at all; you'll be all right when you get out into the air."

"Where's the sun? Isn't it time for it?" she asked, as they set out.

"Yes, it's time, but he hasn't appeared yet. A cloudy day, you know, means fisherman's luck."

"How far is it to the place we're going to fish?"

"Oh, about a mile and a half."

Mrs. Crompton heaved a gentle sigh. "I don't think you'll ever be able to make a sport of me, Parson."

"My dear madam, when once the fascination of angling has taken possession of your soul, physical discomforts will be as naught."

"I doubt it. Nothing has ever so taken possession of my soul that discomforts counted for naught."

"Then you are facing a new experience."

"Well, that's some compensation."

The Parson breathed rapturously. "Just breathe in that air, and see how fresh everything looks, and be content."

"The air's all right, but it's just as good later. I've no patience with these people who think that nature isn't fit to be seen after eight in the morning. It's very narrow-minded, I think. It seems to me distinctly dreary at this hour."

"Early to bed and early to rise, you know."

"No wonder it's counted a virtue; it's disagreeable enough to be one!"

The Parson stopped. "Very well, we'll go back." He started to retrace his tracks.

"Oh, no, now we're started——"

He kept on. "Come along—back we go. I'd no idea my little pleasure-party would prove such a burden."

"It isn't—only you mustn't expect me to be good-natured at this hour. Wait, Parson!" she called after him, but he kept straight ahead. Mrs. Crompton hesitated one moment, and then gave chase. "Please wait!" she called, hurrying after.

There was a perceptible slowing up

in The Parson's gait. "We'll get back for breakfast," he said cheerfully.

"But I don't want to go back for breakfast; I want to go on and fish."

"You've done nothing but complain since we started, so we'd better go back."

"Give me the basket and I'll go fishing alone," she commanded.

"Not at all. I want to go fishing."

"So do I. Please—please, dear Parson, let us go fishing."

He stopped and faced her sternly. "Will you do your part of the work?"

"Yes."

"Will you put up with the discomforts without grumbling?"

"Y-e-s. Can't I give just one little kick?"

He picked up the basket and started off again.

"All right, all right, I won't!" she cried, seizing his arm.

"Very good," said The Parson. "Now we'll go fishing."

They turned and started in the other direction.

"Turn again, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London," said Mrs. Crompton softly. Then they both laughed.

"You're a very nice woman—sometimes," said The Parson, "but in great need of training."

"Oh!" exploded Mrs. Crompton.

In due time and without further recrimination they arrived at the part of the river where fish abounded. The Parson fitted up the poles and turned to Mrs. Crompton. "Pass over a handful of bait," he said.

Mrs. Crompton opened the bucket and promptly dropped it, whereupon a writhing mass of worms squirmed at her feet, and she fled.

"Oh, drat it!" said The Parson, on his knees, shoveling them back. "I forgot you were a woman."

"How can you!" she protested. "Why don't you shovel them in with the lid of the bucket?"

"They don't bite, you know," he assured her, baiting her hook. "Now we'll throw in our lines and walk along the shore until we get a good place."

"Not at all," said she; "I'll get a com-

fortable rock and sit there, and let the fish come to me."

She acted on this decision, much to The Parson's amusement.

"Would you like a book?" he decided.

"The brook is my book—*this* day's sermons in stones."

"I shall fish up-stream. When you get tired, follow."

"But suppose I get a bite?" she called after him.

"You won't—there. But if you do, haul it in, take off the fish, and rebait."

"But I couldn't—I wouldn't rebait for a thousand dollars."

"Then come along and fish," he answered.

Mrs. Crompton rose slowly, wrath in her eye. She was used to the brand of cavalier whose whole thought was for her comfort and pleasure. In fact, comfort and pleasure were Mrs. Crompton's household gods, to whom she offered constant libation. Consequently, The Parson's nonchalant indifference to her wishes piqued and interested her as much as it irritated her—or a little more. She followed him slowly. "I feel like a squaw!" she called to him.

"Won't hurt you," he called back. "I promised you a new sensation. Take care of that rock—it's slippery."

Alas for Mrs. Crompton!—the warning came too late. She stepped on the edge of the slippery rock, plunged forward, full length, and dug her arms into the soft, mucky bank up to the elbows, saluting Mother Earth with her forehead. With a shout of dismay, The Parson flew to the rescue. He had fairly to dig her out, and, strange to say, the voluble Mrs. Crompton was absolutely silent—whether from rage or pain he couldn't make out.

"Are you hurt, Nan?" he asked anxiously.

"Hurt? Hurt?" she blazed. "Can you look at me and ask if I'm hurt?"

She held out her blackened arms and lifted a strangely mottled face.

"But where? But where?" he reiterated anxiously.

"In my feelings, of course. Do you

suppose anybody could look like this and not be hurt?"

He got a flat stick and began to scrape her off, solemnly. His expression suddenly struck her, and she sat down on the rock and laughed until the tears came.

"I'm so sorry——" he began, in alarm at this mirth.

"You look it," she said, with another outburst.

"We'll go straight home," he promised.

"We'll do nothing of the sort. Would you mind fishing out my shoe over there?"

She pointed to a partly submerged object, and he waded in and rescued it, scraping it carefully before returning it.

"I am so sorry," he protested again.

"You poor old dear, don't you bother," she said. "It was a case of pride coming before—and the fall was awful. But I'm going to catch a fish now, if I stay a week."

"Really?" he cried. "Oh, Nan, you're the real thing!"

"And that from the Right Reverend——"

"Don't! Give us your hand and come along."

"We'd better wash the hand first. You hold on to my feet, so I won't go in head first."

Whereupon The Parson laid hold of Mrs. Crompton's feet, and she hung over the edge of the rock and washed her hands and sleeves.

"If any one sees us we're compromised for life," she said.

"Birds and bees don't gossip," he answered.

They got up and away again, and this time The Parson looked after his partner carefully.

"I'm glad I tumbled," she said; "you're so much nicer to me."

They fished for awhile with no success, and then, when hope was almost dead, they struck a place where they were biting. Mrs. Crompton almost repeated her plunge when she got her first bite. After that she was insa-

tible. Even The Parson had no fault to find. Finally he looked at his watch.

"Do you know that it's one o'clock?" he cried.

"One? You don't mean it!"

"I do. Let's stop and eat the sandwiches."

"By all means—I'm starved."

So they picnicked under the trees, like ravenous children, laughing and comparing notes. Then they were off and at it again, until The Parson's weather eye warned him that they were in for a storm. He insisted upon turning back toward the farm, although Mrs. Crompton was for risking all for the joy of another bite. It grew blacker and blacker, and they finally took in their lines and hurried toward home. The lightning crashed down among the trees, and the thunder filled the woods.

"Let's run for it," said The Parson, when they came in sight of the stables.

"All right," said Mrs. Crompton, and started. The poles she carried caught in things, and the string of fish flopped about The Parson's legs; but they kept on, and just as they reached the clearing the storm broke.

"Make for the dog-house!" shouted The Parson; and they tumbled into it, much to the consternation of the resident puppy families.

"Well," said Mrs. Crompton, sinking on the floor in a heap, "if I don't die right here of heart-disease, I miss my guess. Why, I haven't run like that for twenty years."

"You did splendidly," said The Parson, sitting beside her.

"There really isn't room for you," she protested.

"Very well, put out the pups, then," he replied.

"You look perfectly frightful," she said, inspecting him.

"I don't doubt it—so do you. And yet I never saw you look so sweet!"

"Is that a compliment or an insult?"

"Now you look like—you! Not the fashionable Mrs. Crompton, nor the clever Mrs. Crompton, but just Nan Crompton, the sweetest woman in the world."

"Don't! I feel very young and reckless at this moment."

"Good! Then put your hand in mine, dear woman, and say that you will make me happier than I ever dreamed of being."

"I can't—I simply cannot—marry a parson. I've too much sense of humor."

"I don't ask you to marry a parson—I ask you to marry me."

"Aren't you the same?"

"No, the parson is a type, and I am a man."

Just here a terrific crash of thunder shook the dog-house, and Mrs. Crompton's head was buried on The Parson's breast. Here it seems well to draw the curtain. Somewhat later Mrs. Martin and the rest of the party saw a strange sight. Approaching across the garden came the irreproachable Mrs. Crompton, hatless, bespattered with mud, wading along through the wet grass; behind came The Parson, a large straw hat hanging limply about his neck. They laughed and "squashed" along through the water, apparently oblivious of onlookers.

"*Mon Dieu*, Nan!" cried Mrs. Martin, as they came up, "where have you been?"

"Fishing," replied that lady.

"Catch anything, Parson?" asked Tony.

The Parson put down his burdens and faced them all boyishly. "Yes, dearly beloved; I caught a wife."

But Mrs. Crompton was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER X.

Priscilla wandered aimlessly between the close-cut hedges of her garden; idly trailed her hand in the fountain where Aphrodite disported herself; took up her book and sat for a few moments on the terrace; gazed at the blue Italian sky, and sighed. "Oh, dear, I wish he would get through with it!"

"It" was Anthony's book, at which he was working heart and soul, early and late; and it was the only cloud in the clear sky of Priscilla's happiness. She called the book her rival, and some-

times openly rebelled at the time her husband spent with it and away from her. But he was so filled with it, and he made up to her for his neglect in so many gentle ways, that she bore it as patiently as possible, even though the days were long and lonely.

The Drakes had been in Italy nearly a year now, delightfully situated in an old Italian palace, with a wonderful garden. Anthony called it "Priscilla's garden," and threatened to write a poem thereon. Priscilla, however, found herself rebelling sometimes at the very perfection of their life. Her young, restive spirit longed for change, or for the old conditions of life at home in America. Then, too, her mother's letters of late seemed to hint at a loneliness too deep for words, and a want which none but Tony and Priscilla could fill.

The year had brought slow but steady changes in Priscilla. The child whom Anthony Drake had married had blossomed into a woman during the days spent so much alone, and slowly into her life had come a love for Anthony so great and all-absorbing that it frightened her. She thought with wonder of the childish affection she had given him at the time of their marriage, and she shuddered away from the thought that she had married him mainly to please her mother, who seemed to wish it strongly.

A servant interrupted her thoughts. "Will you have the tea on the terrace, madame?"

"No, bring it to the pergola in fifteen minutes, please," she replied, and walked slowly down the steps and through the garden. She stood silently between the pillars of the pergola and waited. Anthony had a desk here in this quiet place, and here the book was being written. He worked now in a very fury of speed and excitement. He did not hear nor see Priscilla at all. Page after page was completed and tossed aside. The servant appeared with the tea, and she motioned him to set it down in silence. Anthony wrote as in a very frenzy of effort; Priscilla thought she had never seen him so uncontrolled. At last he threw down the

pencil and stretched his arms straight above his head, with a deep sigh, as of a man coming out of a trance.

"Thank Heaven!" he said, and then he saw his wife. "Dearest, it's finished, it's finished!" he said boyishly, coming to her. He took her in his arms, and she almost sobbed.

"Oh, Tony, I'm so glad! I'm so glad!"

He put her aside and began to pace up and down, in his excitement. "It's a big book, Priscilla; it's a great book!"

"Tony, I hate it!" she cried, and all the concentrated loneliness and jealousy of the last ten months came out in the outburst.

He turned suddenly and looked at her in astonishment—at her flushed face and tense body. He went to her quickly. "What is it, Priscilla? What is it you hate?"

"The book. It takes all your thoughts and time and hopes; there is no room for me."

"Priscilla!" he said, and drew her into his arms again. "Tell me what you mean."

"All day long I have to wait for you to be through with it. I sit and sit, and try to be patient, but I want you so, and I want to talk to you, and I'm so lonesome."

"Heart's dearest," he said, "I never knew, I never thought! To me the inspiration of the hours we spent together had to have its outlet; all that you awakened in me, dear, that I had never dreamed of, had to come to fruition, and it has blossomed in this book—this book that is you! Dear, I'll burn the book, if that will be atonement;" he said it solemnly, like a father offering to sacrifice his child.

"Oh, my dear, my heart of hearts, don't say such a thing! Don't say anything more. I didn't mean it—it just came out in spite of me. Oh, Tony, it's just as I feared! I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy."

"Worthy, Priscilla? Don't!"

"I'm only a hindrance."

"Priscilla, you hurt me more than you know."

She drew his face down to her and

kissed his forehead, his eyes, and, last of all, his lips. "Forgive me, and love me, Tony—love me half as well as I love you, and I'll be satisfied." She went to the tea-table, and motioned him to his place. "Come and get your tea—you're tired out."

"I feel as if something had burst in my head, and the relief—you've no idea how great it is!"

She passed him his tea and poured her own. "I'm so glad, dear, for you. And now I've a suggestion to make."

"I'm all ears, madame."

"I've had a letter from mother today."

"Did you? Good! Lord! if she were only here to-night!"

She glanced at him wistfully. "Yes, if she only were! It's a very ostensibly cheerful letter, but very lonely between the lines, and so I say, let's go home to mother."

"All right; there's no reason why we shouldn't—now," he said promptly.

She leaped to her feet. "Tony—really?" she cried joyously.

He looked at her curiously. "Has it been as bad as that, my wife?"

"Bad? No, it's perfect—almost. I'm just homesick and mother-sick."

"When shall we go?"

"Tony, you're such a dear! Let's go right away—next week—and surprise her."

"Whenever you say. I can scarcely wait to get the manuscript into her hands," he added.

While the shadows lengthened, and the sun went down behind the yew-trees in the garden, they sat hand in hand and planned their homeward journey.

"It's as good as planning our honeymoon, isn't it? I never knew before how much I could miss mother," Priscilla said.

"I never knew before how much I could miss her," Tony added.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Martin sat on the couch, the chapters of Tony's book about her. Drake himself walked nervously about

the room. She had been silently tearing out the heart of it for hours, and he had been on the rack, awaiting judgment.

Priscilla came in and out, watching them curiously, but they paid no attention to her. She felt the atmosphere charged with the same excitement that had surrounded Anthony that day she watched him put the finishing touches to the book. Indeed, there was the same strain in her mother's quick breathing, and the way she tossed aside page after page as she read them. Priscilla stood at the door, like a child shut out.

Mrs. Martin read the last word and sat like one in a dream, and Anthony came and stood before her, waiting. She rose slowly and looked at him, her eyes shining, her heart in her face, her hands outstretched.

"Oh, Anthony, Anthony!" she said softly, "you are redeemed!"

He took her hands and bent his forehead on them, and drew in his breath sharply in a sob of relief. Then he turned and went past Priscilla swiftly.

She stood a moment, tottering, like one dazzled by a sudden stroke of lightning, then she walked to the couch and faced her mother. The glory still rested on Mrs. Martin's face.

"Mother, mother!" Priscilla whispered in horror.

Mrs. Martin looked at her absently.

"Mother—you love Anthony!"

Mrs. Martin started as if struck.

"You do—I saw it then, a moment ago, in your face!"

"Well?"

"You don't deny it?"

Mrs. Martin looked her daughter squarely in the eye, measuring her.

"No, Priscilla, I don't deny it."

"And you have loved him all along?"

"Yes, I've loved him all along."

Priscilla blazed out in a fury of rage.

"How dared you? How dared you?"

she said. "You gave me to him. I never would have thought of marrying him if you had not wanted me to. I didn't love him at all when you married me to him."

"Well?"

"And now I've grown to love him as I never loved anything in my life, not even you, our love is the—the most wonderful thing in the world—and now you—you—"

"Well?"

"I can't give him up to you, mother; I can't, I can't!"

"There is no need of any such talk between us. If you will listen to me—"

"I can't—my heart is broken. Why, all my love for you is just a sword to stab you with, and my love for him is—"

Mrs. Martin put her hand on Priscilla's arm and drew her down beside her. "Now, listen. It seems best that there should be truth between us at last. Years ago, when Tony first began to monopolize my life, I knew that I loved him, and after a year of bitter suffering I realized that he did not love me. After awhile I grew to believe that even a love that is unreturned was better than no love at all. Then you came, and battered down the ramparts I had so carefully built around my heart, and crept inside. There was only room for you and Tony.

"It was fate, I suppose, that decreed that Tony should fall in love with you. I had given him all there was in me, mentally and emotionally, and now it was left me to give him—you. I knew he had come to the time when he needed this tardy awakening. You were young, impressionable, fond of him. I was not sure that you could fill his life alone, but I could help you, always hiding my secret. There was no sacrifice of you, Priscilla."

"No, there was not," she admitted; "but you loved him then—why didn't you marry him?"

"Because he didn't love me, and he needed love to make him what he is to-day—what you have made him."

"But what of *us*, mother?"

"We loved him, and what is loving but giving?"

"He asked you to be his wife, mother?"

"Yes."

"And you let *me*, when you loved him so?"

"Yes."

"Did you think of my happiness, mother?"

"Yes. I knew you would grow to be—what you are, dear. I knew what your power of love could do for him, and what it would do for you. You have been happy, Priscilla?"

"Happy? Oh, mother, there is no word—"

"I know—I am so glad."

"But now what are we going to do?"

"To do? Need we do anything? I ask only for whatever place in your lives you can spare me—you and Tony, you two people whom I love dearest and best."

"But, dear, doesn't Tony know?"

"No, and he must never know."

"Perhaps if I had never come home at all you might have had this happiness."

"Priscilla, don't make me regret that I have laid my soul bare to you."

Priscilla touched her mother's hand with her cheek. "You gave your happiness to me! I'd like to give mine all to you."

"It was not meant for me. Some of us grow to our full height through joy and fulfilment, some through suffering and renunciation."

"But does growth count without the joy?"

"Can you ask me that, dear, when you see the serenity of my life, now grown big with loving?"

"I wonder if my joy will bring me to the height you've reached!"

"You should go farther, with your husband's help, and as for him, you've brought him to his own—"

"Not I, mother, but you and I—we've done it together."

"Yes, the redemption of Anthony has come through love, and since his greatness means so much to the world, perhaps we were put here just for that."

"What's that about Anthony?" Drake asked, coming in and throwing himself down beside them.

"It's mostly love—about Anthony," Priscilla said.

AUDREY CRAVEN

By May Sinclair

Author of "THE DIVINE FIRE"

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Katherine came back from the National Gallery she found Ted alone—he had drawn up the couch in front of his easel, and lay there gazing at his portrait. The

restless, hungry look had gone from his eyes. There was no triumph there, only an absolute satisfaction and repose. Face and attitude said plainly: "I have attained my heart's desire. I am young in years, but old in wisdom. I know what faith and hope and love are, which is more than you do. I am not in the least excited about them, as you see; I can afford to wait, for these things last forever. If you like, you may come and worship with me before my heavenly lady's image; but if you do, you must hold your tongue." And Katherine, being a sensible woman, held her tongue. But she took up a tiny pair of white gloves, stained with paint and turpentine, that lay folded on the easel's ledge, and, after examining them critically, laid them on Ted's feet without a word. A faint smile flickered across his lips. That was all their confession.

After some inward debate, Katherine determined to go over and see Audrey. She had no very clear notion of what had happened that morning; but she could only think that the ridiculous boy had proposed to Audrey and been accepted. The idea seemed preposterous; for, though she had been by no means blind to all that had been going on under her eyes for the last few

months, she had never for a moment taken Audrey seriously, or supposed that Ted in his sober senses could do so, either. This morning a horrible misgiving had come over her, and she had gone to her work in a tumult of mixed feelings. For the present she had made Ted's career the end and aim of her existence. What she most dreaded for him, next to the pain of a hopeless attachment, was the distraction of a successful one. A premature engagement is the thing of all others to blast a man's career at the outset. What good was it, she asked herself passionately, for her to pinch and save, to put aside her own ambition, to do the journeyman's work that brings pay, instead of the artist's work that brings praise, if Ted was going to fling himself away on the first pretty face that took his fancy? Again the feeling of hatred to Audrey surged up in her heart, and again it died down at the first sight of its object.

Audrey was standing at the window, singing a little song to herself. She turned as the door opened, and when she saw Katherine she started ever so slightly, and stood at gaze like a frightened fawn. She was attracted by Katherine, as she was by every personality that she felt to be stronger than her own. Among all artists there is a strain of manhood in every woman, and of womanhood in every man. Katherine fascinated her weaker sister by some such super-feminine charm. At the same time, Audrey was afraid of her, as she had been afraid of Hardy in his passion, or of Ted in his boisterous mirth. There were moments when she

thought that Katherine's direct, unquestioning gaze must have seen what she hid from her own eyes; must have penetrated the more or less artistic disguises without which she would not have known herself. Now her one anxiety was lest Katherine knew or guessed her treatment of Vincent, and had come to reproach her with it. Owing to some slight similarity of detail, the events of the morning had brought the recollection of that last scene with Hardy uppermost in her mind. She had persuaded herself that her love for Ted was her first experience of passion, as it was his; but at the touch of one awkward memory the bloom was somehow brushed off this little romance. For these reasons there was fear in her gray eyes as she put up her face to Katherine's to be kissed.

"Do you know?" she half whispered. "Has he told you?"

"No, he has told me nothing; but I know."

There was silence as the two women sat down side by side and looked into each other's faces. Katherine's instinct was to soothe and protect the shy creatures that shrank from her, and Audrey in her doubt and timidity appealed to her more than she had ever done in the self-conscious triumph of her beauty. She took her hand, caressing it gently as she spoke.

"Audrey—you won't mind telling me frankly? Are you engaged to Ted?"

True to her imitative instincts, Audrey could be frank with the frank. "Yes, I am. But it's our own little secret, and we don't want anybody to know yet."

"Perhaps you are wise." She paused. How could she make Audrey understand what she had to say? She was not going to ask her to break off her engagement. In the first place, she had no right to do so; in the second place, any interference in these cases is generally fatal to its own ends. But she wanted to make Audrey realize the weight of her responsibility.

"Audrey," she said at last, "do you remember our first meeting, when you thought Ted was a baby?"

"Yes, of course I do. That was only six, seven months ago; and to think that I should be engaged to him now! Isn't it funny?"

"Very funny indeed. But you were perfectly right. He is a baby. He knows no more than a baby does of the world, and of the men in it. Of the women he knows rather less than an intelligent baby."

"I wouldn't have him different. He needn't know anything about other women, so long as he understands *me*."

"Well, the question is, does he understand himself? What's more, are you sure you understand him? Ted is two people rolled into one, and very badly rolled, too. The human part of him has hardly begun to grow yet; he's got no practical common sense to speak of, and only a rudimentary heart."

"Oh, Katherine!"

"Quite true—it's all I had at his age. But the ideal, the artistic side of him, is all but full-grown. That means that it's just at the critical stage now."

"Of course, I suppose it would be." Audrey always said "Of course" when she especially failed to see the drift of what was said to her.

"Yes; but do you realize all that the next few years will do for him? That they will either make or ruin his career as an artist? They ought to be years of downright hard work, of solitary hard work; he ought to have them all to himself. Do you mean to let him have them?"

Audrey lowered her eyes and sat silent, playing with the ribbons of her dress, while Katherine went on, as if to herself:

"He is so young, so dreadfully young. It would have been soon enough in another ten years' time. Oh, Audrey, why did you let it come to this?"

"Well, really, Katherine, I couldn't help it. Besides, one has one's feelings. You talk as if I was going to stand in Ted's way—as if I didn't care a straw. Surely his career must mean more to his wife than it can to his sister! I know you think that because I haven't been trained like you, because I've lived a different life from yours,

that I can't love art as you do. You're mistaken. To begin with, I made up my mind ten years ago that whatever I did when I grew up, I wouldn't marry a nonentity. What do you suppose Ted's fascination was, if it wasn't his genius and his utter unlikeness to anybody else?"

"Geniuses are common enough nowadays; there are plenty more where he came from."

"How cynical you are! You haven't met many people like Ted, have you?"

"No, I haven't. Oh, Audrey, do you *really* care like that? I wonder how I should feel if I were you, and knew that Ted's future lay in my hands, as it lies in yours."

Audrey's cheeks reddened with pleasure. "It does! It does!" She clasped her little hands passionately, as if they were holding Ted and his future tight. "I know it. All I want is to inspire him, to keep him true to himself. Haven't I done it? You know what his work was like before he loved me. Can you say that he ever painted better than he does now, or even one-half as well?"

Katherine could not honestly say that he had; but she smiled as she answered: "No; but for the last six months he has done nothing from anybody but yourself. You make a very charming picture, Audrey, but you can hardly want people to say that your husband can only paint one type."

"My husband can paint as many types as he pleases." Katherine still looked dubious. "Anything more?"

"Yes, one thing. You say you want to keep Ted true to himself, as you put it. He made up his mind this morning to go to Paris to study hard for six months. It means a lot of self-sacrifice for you both, to be separated so soon; but it will be the making of him. You won't let him change his mind? You won't say anything to keep him back, will you?"

Audrey's face had suddenly grown hard, and she looked away from Katherine as she answered: "You're not very consistent, I must say. You can't think Ted such an utter baby if you trust him to go off to Paris all by him-

self. As to his making up his mind this morning, our engagement alters all that. After all, how can it affect Ted's career if he goes now or three years hence?"

"It makes all the difference."

"I can't see it. And yet—and yet—I wouldn't spoil Ted's chances for worlds." She rose and walked a few paces to and fro. "Let me think, let me think!" She stood still, an image of abstract justice, with one hand folded over her eyes, and the other clenched as if it held the invisible scales of destiny, weighing her present, overcharged with agreeable sensations, against her lover's future. Apparently, after some shifting of the weights, she had made the two balance, for she clapped her hands suddenly, and exclaimed, with an emphasis on every other word:

"Katherine! An inspiration! We'll go to Paris for our honeymoon, and Ted shall stay there six months—a year—forever, if he likes. Paris is the place I adore above all others. I shall simply live in that dear Louvre!" She added in more matter-of-fact tones: "And I needn't order my trousseau till I get there. That'll save no end of bother on this side. I hate the way we do things here. For weeks before your wedding-day to have to think of nothing but clothes, clothes, clothes—could anything be more revolting?"

"Yes," said Katherine; "to think of them before a funeral."

Audrey looked offended. Death, like religion, is one of those subjects which it is very bad taste to mention under some circumstances.

Katherine went away more disheartened than ever, and more especially weighed down by the consciousness that she had made a fool of herself. She knew Audrey to be vain, she divined that she was selfish, but at least she had believed that she could be generous. By letting her feel that she held Ted's future in her hands, she had roused all her woman's vague cupidity and passion for power, and henceforth any appeal to her generosity would be worse than useless. With a little of her old artistic egoism, Katherine valued her brother's

career very much as a thing of her own making, and the idea of another woman meddling with it and spoiling it was insupportable. It was as if some reckless colorist had taken the *Witch of Atlas* and daubed her all over with frightful scarlet and magenta. But the trouble at her heart of hearts was the certainty that Audrey, that creature of dubious intellect and fitful emotions, would never be able to love Ted as his wife should love him.

CHAPTER VIII.

All true revelations soon seem as old as the hills and as obvious. Yesterday they were not, to-day they have struck you dumb, to-morrow they will have become commonplaces, and henceforth you will be incapable of seeing anything else. So it was with Audrey. Her engagement was barely a week old before she felt that it had lasted forever. Not that she was tired of it; on the contrary, she hoped everything from Ted's eccentricity. She was sick to death of the polished conventional type—the man who, if he came into her life at all, must be introduced in the recognized way; while Ted, who had dropped into it literally through a skylight, roused her unflagging interest and curiosity. She was always longing to see what the boy would say and do next. Poor Audrey! Her own character was mainly such a bundle of negations that you described her best by saying what she was not; but other people's positive qualities acted on her as a powerful stimulant, and it was one for which she perpetually craved. She had found it in Hardy. In him it was the almost physical charm of blind will, and she yielded to it unwillingly. She had found it in Ted under the intoxicating form of vivid emotion. Life with Vincent would have been an unbroken bondage. Life with Ted would have no tyrannous continuity; it would be a series of splendid episodes. At the same time, it seemed to her that she had always lived this sort of life. Like the "souls" in Ted's ingenious masterpiece, Audrey had suffered a metemp-

sychosis, and her very memory was changed. The change was not so much shown in the character of her dress and her surroundings (Audrey was not the first woman who has tried to be original by following the fashion); these things were only the outward signs of an inward transformation. If her worship of the beautiful was not natural, it was not altogether affected. She really appreciated the things she saw, though she only saw them through as much of Ted's mind as was transparent to her at the moment. It never occurred to her to ask herself whether she would have chosen to stand quite so often on the Embankment watching the sun go down behind Battersea Bridge, or whether she would have sat quite so many hours in the National Gallery looking at those white-faced, gray-eyed Madonnas of Botticelli that Ted was never tired of talking about. It was so natural that he should be always with her when she did these things, that it was impossible to disentangle her ideas and say what was her own and what was his. She was not given to self-analysis.

But there were limits to Audrey's capacity for receiving impressions. Between her and the world where Katherine always lived, and which Ted visited at intervals now becoming rarer and rarer, there was a great gulf fixed. After all, Audrey had no grasp of the impersonal; she could only care for any object as it gave her certain emotions, raised certain associations, or drew attention to herself. She was at home in the dim borderland between art and nature, the region of vanity and vague sensation. Here she could meet Ted half-way and talk to him about ideals for the hour together. But in the realm of pure art, as he had told her when she once said that she liked all his pictures because they were his, personalities count for nothing; you must have an eye for the thing itself, and the thing itself was the one thing that Audrey could not see. In that world she was a pilgrim and a stranger; it was peopled with shadowy fantastic rivals, who left her with no field and no favor; flesh

and blood were powerless to contend against them. They excited no jealousy—they were too intangible for that; but in their half-seen presence she had a sense of helpless irritation and bewilderment—it baffled, overpowered, and humiliated her. To a woman thirsting for a great experience, it was hard to find that the best things lay always just beyond her reach; that in Ted's life, after all of it that she had absorbed and made her own, there was still an elusive something on which she had no hold. Not that she allowed this reflection to trouble her happiness long. As Katherine had said, Ted was two people very imperfectly rolled into one. Consciously or unconsciously, it became more and more Audrey's aim to separate them, to play off the one against the other. This called for but little skill on her part. Ted's passion at its white-heat had fused together the boy's soul and the artist's, but at any temperature short of that its natural effect was disintegration. Audrey had some cause to congratulate herself on the result. It might or might not have been flattering to be called a "clever puss" or an "imaginative minx" (Ted chose his epithets at random) whenever she pointed out some novel effect of color or picturesque grouping; but it was now July, and Ted had not done a stroke of work since he put the last touches to her portrait in April.

It was now July, and from across the Atlantic came the first rumors of Hardy's return. Within a month, or six weeks at the latest, he would be in England, in London. The news set Audrey thinking, and, think as she would, the question perpetually recurred: Whether would it be better to announce her engagement to Ted, or still keep it a secret, still drift on indefinitely as they had done for the last four months? If Audrey had formed any idea of the future at all, it was as a confused mirage of possibilities: visions of express trains in which she and Ted were whirled on forever through strange landscapes; visions of Parisian life as she pictured it—a series of exquisite idyls, the long days of

quivering sunlight under blue skies, the brief languid nights dying into dawn, coffee and rolls brought to you before you get up, strawberries eaten with claret instead of cream because cream makes you ill in hot climates, the Paris of fiction and the Paris of commonplace report; and with it all, scene after scene in which she figured as doing a thousand extravagant and interesting things, always dressed in appropriate costumes, always making characteristic little speeches to Ted, who invariably replied with some delicious absurdity. The peculiarity of these scenes was that though they succeeded each other through endless time, yet neither she nor Ted ever appeared a day older in them. As Audrey's imagination borrowed nothing from the past, it had no sense of the demands made by the future. Now, although in publicly announcing her engagement to Ted she would give a fixity to this floating phantasmagoria which would rob it of half its charm, on the other hand she felt the need of some such definite and stable tie to secure her against Vincent's claim, the solidity of which she now realized for the first time. Unable to come to any conclusion, she continued to think.

The news from America had set old Miss Craven thinking, too. "She had at first rejoiced at Audrey's intimacy with the Havilands, for various reasons. She was glad to see her settling down—for the first time in her volatile life—into a friendship with another girl; to hear of her being interested in picture-galleries; to find a uniform gaiety taking the place of the restless, captious moods which made others suffer besides herself. As for the boy, he was a nice clever boy who would make his way in the world; but he was only "the boy." Three months ago, if anybody had told Miss Craven that there was a possibility of an engagement between Audrey and Ted Haviland, she would have laughed them to scorn. But when it gradually dawned on her that Katherine hardly ever called at the house with her brother, that he and Audrey went everywhere together, and Kath-

erine never made a third in their expeditions, it occurred to her that she really ought to speak a word in season. Her only difficulty was to find the season. After much futile watching of her opportunity, she resolved to trust to the inspiration of the moment. Unfortunately, the moment of the inspiration happened to be that in which Audrey came in dressed for a row up the river, and chafing with anxiety because Ted was ten minutes behind time. This at once suggested the subject in hand. But Miss Craven began cautiously:

"Audrey, my dear, do you think you've enough wraps with you? These evenings on the river are treacherous." Audrey gave an impatient twitch to a sort of Elizabethan ruff she wore round her neck.

"How tiresome of Ted to be late, when I particularly told him to be early!"

"Is Miss Haviland going with you? Poor girl, she looks as if a blow on the river would do her good."

"N-no, she isn't."

"H'm!—you'd better wait and have some tea first."

"I've waited quite long enough already. We're going to drive to Hammersmith, and we shall get tea there or at Kew."

"I don't want to interfere with your amusements, but doesn't it strike you as—er—a little imprudent to go about so much with 'Ted,' as you call him?"

"No, of course not. He's not going to throw me overboard. It's the most natural thing in the world that I should go with him."

"Yes, to you, my dear, and I dare say to the young man himself. But if you are seen together, people are sure to talk."

"Let them. I don't mind in the least—I rather like it."

"Like it?"

"Yes. You must own it's flattering. People here wouldn't take the trouble to talk if I were nobody. London isn't Oxford."

"No; you may do many things in Oxford which you mayn't do in London. But times have changed. I can't

imagine your dear mother saying she would 'like' to be talked about."

"Please don't speak about mother in that way; you know I never could bear it. Oh, there's a ring at the front door! That's Ted." She stood on tiptoe, bending forward, and held her ear to the half-open door. "No, it isn't; it's some wretched visitor. Don't keep me, Cousin Bella, or I shall be caught."

"Really, Audrey, now we are on the subject, I must just tell you that your conduct lately has given me a great deal of anxiety."

"My conduct! What *do* you mean? I haven't broken any of the seven commandments. (Thank goodness, they've gone!)"

"I mean that if you don't take care you'll be entangling yourself with young Mr. Haviland, as you did——"

"As I did with Vincent, I suppose. That *is* so like you. You're always thinking things, always putting that and that together, and doing it quite wrong. You were hopelessly out of it about Vincent. Whether you're wrong or right about Mr. Haviland, I simply sha'n't condescend to tell you." And having lashed herself into a state of indignation, Audrey went on warmly: "I'm not a child of ten. I won't have my actions criticized. I won't have my motives spied into. I won't be ruled by your miserable middle-class, provincial standard. What I do is nobody's business but my own."

"Very well, very well; go your own way, and take the consequences. If it's not my business, don't blame me when you get into difficulties."

Audrey turned round with a withering glance.

"Cousin Bella, you are really *too* stupid!" she said, with a movement of her foot that was half rage, half sheer excitement. "Ah, there's Ted at last!" She ran joyously away. Miss Craven sank back in her chair, exhausted by her unusual moral effort, and too deeply hurt to return the smile which Audrey flashed back on her, by way of apology, as she flew.

The bitter little dialogue, at any rate, had the good effect of waking Audrey

to the practical aspects of her problem. Before their engagement could be announced, it was clear that Ted ought to be properly introduced to her friends. However she might affect to brave it out, Audrey was sensitive to the least breath of unfavorable opinion, and she did not want it said that she had picked up her husband Heaven knows how, when, and where. If they had been talked about already, no time should be lost before people realized that Ted was a genius with a future before him, his sister a rising artist, also, and so on. Audrey was busy with these thoughts as she was being rowed up the river from Hammersmith. At Kew the room where they had tea was full of people she knew; and as she and Ted passed on to a table in a far corner, she felt, rather than saw, that the men looked after them, and the women exchanged glances. The same thing happened at Richmond, where they dined; and there a little knot of people gathered about the river's bank and watched their departure with more than friendly interest. If she had any lingering doubts before, Audrey was ready now to make her engagement known, for mere prudence's sake. And as they almost drifted down in the quiet July evening, between the humid afterglow of the sunset and the dawn of the moonlit night, Audrey felt a wholly new and delicate sensation. It was as if she were penetrated for the first time by the indefinable, tender influences of air and moonlight and running water. The mood was vague and momentary—a mere fugitive reflection of the rapture with which Ted, rowing lazily now with the current, drank in the glory of life, and felt the heart of all nature beating with his. Yet for that one instant, transient as it was, Audrey's decision was being shaped for her by a motive finer than all prudence, stronger than all sense of propriety. In its temporary transfiguration her love for Ted was such that she would have been ready, if need were, to fix Siberia for their honeymoon and to-morrow for their wedding-day. As they parted on her door-step at Chelsea, between ten

and eleven o'clock, she whispered: "Ted, that row down was like heaven! I've never, never been so happy in all my life!" If she did not fix their wedding-day then and there, she did the next best thing—she fixed the day for a dinner to be given in Ted's honor. Not a tedious, large affair, of course. She was only going to ask a few people who would appreciate Ted, and be useful to him in "the future."

As it was nearly the end of the season, Audrey had no time to lose, and the first thing she did after her arrival was to startle Miss Craven by the sudden question:

"Cousin Bella, who was the man who rushed out of his bath into the street shouting 'Eureka'?"

"I never heard of any one doing so," said Cousin Bella, a little testily; "and if he did, it was most improper of him."

"Wasn't it? Never mind; he had an idea, so have I. I think I shall run out onto the Embankment and shout 'Eureka,' too. Aren't you dying to know? I'm going to give a grand dinner for Te—for Mr. and Miss Haviland; and I'm not going to ask one—single—nonentity—there! First of all, we must have Mr. Knowles—of course. Then—perhaps—Mr. Flaxman Reed. H'm!—yes; we haven't asked him since he came up to St. Teresa's. If he isn't anybody in particular, you can't exactly call him nobody." Having settled the question of Mr. Flaxman Reed, Audrey sat down and sent off several invitations on the spot.

Owing to some refusals, the dinner-party gradually shrank in size and importance, and it was not until within four days of its date that Audrey discovered to her dismay that she was "a man short." As good luck would have it, she met Knowles that afternoon in Regent Street, and confided to him her difficulty and her firm determination not to fill the gap with any "nonentity" whatever. Audrey was a little bit afraid of Mr. Percival Knowles, and nothing but real extremity would have driven her to this desperate course. "If you could suggest any one I know, who

isn't a nonentity, and who wouldn't mind such ridiculously short notice; it's really quite an informal little dinner, got up in a hurry, you know, for Mr. Haviland, a very clever young artist, and his sister."

Knowles smiled faintly; he had heard before of the very clever young artist (though not of his sister). He was all sympathy.

"Sorry. I can't think of any one you know—*not* a nonentity—but I should like to bring a friend, if I may. You don't know him, I think, but I believe he very much wants to know you."

"Bring him, by all means, if he won't mind such a casual invitation."

"I'll make that all right."

Knowles lifted his hat, and was about to hurry away.

"By the bye, you haven't told me your friend's name."

He stopped, and answered, with a sibilant incoherence, struggling as he was with his amusement. But at that moment Audrey's attention was diverted by the sight of Ted coming out of the New Gallery, and she hardly heard what was being said to her.

"I shall be delighted to see Mr. St. John," she called back, making a random shot at the name, and went on her way with leisurely haste toward the New Gallery.

CHAPTER IX.

On the evening of her dinner Audrey had some difficulty in distributing her guests. After all, eight had accepted. Besides the Havilands, with Mr. Knowles and his friend, Mr. St. John, there was Mr. Flaxman Reed, who, as Audrey now discovered, greatly to her satisfaction, was causing some excitement in the religious world by his interesting attitude midway between High Anglicanism and Rome. There were Mr. Dixon Barnett, the great Asiatic explorer, and his wife; and Miss Gladys Armstrong, the daring authoress of "Sour Grapes" and "Through Fire to Moloch," two novels dealing with the problem of heredity. Audrey had to contrive as best she might to make her-

self the center of attraction throughout the evening, and at the same time do justice to each of her distinguished guests. The question was: Who was to take her in to dinner? After weighing impartially the claims of her three more or less intimate acquaintances, Audrey decided in favor of the unknown. She felt unusual complacency with this arrangement. Her fancies were beginning to cluster round the idea of Mr. St. John with curiosity. It was to be herself and Mr. St. John, then, Mr. Knowles and Miss Armstrong, of course; the critic was so cynical and hard to please that she felt a little triumphant in having secured some one whom he would surely be delighted to meet. Mr. Flaxman Reed and Katherine—n-no, Mrs. Dixon Barnett, Mr. Dixon Barnett falling to Katherine's share. For Ted, quite naturally, there remained nobody but Cousin Bella. "Poor boy, he'll be terribly bored, I'm afraid, but it can't be helped."

The Havilands were the first to arrive.

"How superb you look!" was Audrey's exclamation, as she kissed her friend on both cheeks and stepped back to take a good look at her. Katherine's appearance justified the epithet. Her gown, the work of her own hands, was of some transparent black stuff, swathed about her breasts, setting off the honey-like pallor of her skin; her slight figure supplied any grace that was wanting in the draperies. That black and white was a splendid foil for Audrey's burnished hair and her dress, an ingenious medley of flesh-pink, apple-green, and ivory silk.

"One moment, dear; just let me pin that chiffon up on your shoulder, to make your sleeves look wider—there!" She hovered round Katherine, spying out the weak points in her dress, and disguising them with quick, skilful fingers. A woman never looks more charming than when doing these little services for another. So Ted thought, as he watched Audrey laying her white arms about his sister, and putting her head on one side to survey the effect critically. To the boy, with his senses

sharpened to an almost feverish subtilty by the incessant stimulus of his imagination, Audrey was the epitome of everything most completely and joyously alive. Roses, sunlight, flame, with the shifting, waving lines of all things most fluent and elusive, were in her face, her hair, the movements of her limbs. Her body was like a soul to its clothes; it animated, inspired the masses of silk and lace. He could not think of her as she was—the creature of the day and the hour, modern from the surface to the core. Yet never had she looked more modern than at this moment; never had that vivid quality, that touch of artificial distinction, appeared more stereotyped in its very perfection and finish. But Ted, in the first religious fervor of his passion, had painted her as the Saint of the Beatific Vision; and in the same way, to Ted, ever since that evening on the river, she recalled none but open-air images. She was linked by flowery chains of association to an idyllic past—a past of four days ago. Her very caprices suggested the shy approaches and withdrawals of some divinity of nature. It was by these harmless fictions, each new one rising on the ruins of the old, that Ted managed to keep his ideal of Audrey intact.

There was a slight stir in the passage outside the half-open door. Audrey, still busy about Katherine's dress, seemed not to hear it.

"My dear Audrey!" protested Miss Craven, from her corner.

"There, that'll do," said Katherine, laughing; "you've stuck quite enough pins into me for one night."

"Stand still, and don't wriggle!" cried Audrey, as the door opened wide. For a second she was conscious of being watched by eyes that were not Ted's or anything like them. At the same time the footman announced in a firm, clear voice: "Mr. Knowles and Mr. Langley Wyndham!"

She had heard this time. The look she had seen from the doorway was the same look that had followed her in the dean's drawing-room at Oxford. All the emotions of that evening

thronged back into her mind—the vague fascination, the tense excitement, the mortification that resulted from the wound to her self-love and pride.

So this was Mr. St. John!

A year ago he had refused an introduction to her, and now he wanted to know her; his friend had said so. He was seeking the acquaintance of his own accord, without encouragement. How odd it all was! Well, whether his former discourtesy had been intentional or not, he knew how to apologize for it gracefully.

She had no time to think more about the matter, for her remaining guests came in all together; and in another five minutes Audrey was suffering from that kind of nightmare in which some grave issue—you don't know precisely what—hangs on the adjustment of trifles, absurdly disproportioned to the events, and which disarrange themselves perversely at the dramatic moment. Everything seemed to go wrong. She had relied on Knowles and Miss Gladys Armstrong for a brilliant display of intellectual fireworks; but beyond the first casual remarks absolutely required of them, they had not a word to say to each other. Miss Armstrong managed cleverly enough to strike a little spark of epigram from the flinty dialogue. It flickered and went out. Knowles smiled politely at the abortive attempt; but at her first serious remark he shook his head, as much as to say: "My dear lady, this is a conundrum; I give it up," and finally turned to Katherine, on his left. In fact, he monopolized her during the rest of dinner, much to the annoyance of Mr. Dixon Barnett, who spent himself in futile efforts to win back her interest—his behavior in its turn rousing the uneasy attention of Mrs. Dixon Barnett. She, again, was so preoccupied in watching the movements of her lord, that she almost forgot the existence of Mr. Flaxman Reed, who sat silent and depressed under her shadow.

Wyndham gave Audrey credit for great perspicacity in pairing these two off together. "Poor fellow," he said to himself; "to preserve him from the

temptations of the world and the flesh, she's considerably sent him in with the devil." For his own part, he devoted himself to Audrey and his dinner. From time to time he glanced across the table, and whenever he did so the corners of Knowles' mouth twitched nervously, and he began to stroke his upper lip—a provoking habit of his, seeing that he had no mustache to account for it. Evidently there was some secret understanding between the two, and Wyndham was gravely and maliciously amused.

Katherine was enjoying herself, too, but without malice. She had so few acquaintances and lived so much in the studio, that it was all fresh life to her. She was pleased with that unconscious irony of Audrey's which had thrown Knowles and Miss Armstrong together; pleased with the by-play between Knowles and Wyndham, and with the behavior of the married couple. It was always a delight to her to watch strange faces. Mrs. Dixon Barnett was a big woman, with a long head, and she looked something like a horse with its ears laid back, her hair being arranged to carry out that idea. The great Asiatic explorer, whose round face wore an expression of permanent surprise, suggested a man who has met with some sudden shock from which he has never recovered. Katherine felt sorry for the Asiatic explorer. She felt sorry for Miss Gladys Armstrong, too, a little pale woman with a large gaze that seemed to take you in without looking at you. Her face, still young and child-like, was scored with the marks of hard work and eager ambition, and there was bitterness in the downward droop of her delicate mouth. Yet the authoress of "Sour Grapes" was undeniably a successful woman. And Wyndham, too, the successful man—Wyndham's face attracted Katherine in spite of herself, it was full of such curious inconsistencies. Altogether it was refined, impressive, almost noble; yet each of the features contradicted itself, the others, and the whole. The general outline was finely cut, but it looked a little worn at the edges. The shaven lips were sen-

sitive, but they had hard curves at the corners; they were firm, without expressing self-restraint. In the same way the nose was fine at the bridge, and coarse toward the nostrils. The iris of the eyes was beautiful, with its clear brown streaks on an orb of greenish gray; yet his eyes were the most disagreeable feature in Wyndham's face. As for Knowles, he interested her with his genial cynicism; but it was a relief to turn from these restless types to Mr. Flaxman Reed. He had the face of the ideal ascetic—sweet in its austerity, militant in its renunciation. What in Heaven's name was he doing at Audrey Craven's dinner-table?

Katherine was not too much absorbed in these speculations to see that Ted was behaving very prettily to old Miss Craven, and making himself useful by filling up awkward pauses with irrelevant remarks. The boy looked perfectly happy. Audrey's mere presence seemed to satisfy him, though she had not spoken a dozen words to him that evening, and was separated from him by the length of the table. At last she rose, and as he held the door open for her to go out, she turned to him with arched eyebrows and a smile that was meant to say: "You've been shamefully neglected, I know, but I had to attend to these tiresome people." Katherine saw Mr. Wyndham making a mental note of the look and the smile. She had taken an instinctive dislike to that man.

Up-stairs in the drawing-room the five women settled down in a confidential group, and with one accord fell to discussing Mr. Wyndham. Miss Craven began it by mildly wondering whether he "looked so disagreeable on purpose, or because he couldn't help it." On the whole, she inclined to the more charitable view.

"What do you say, Kathy?" asked Audrey, without looking up.

"I agree with Miss Craven in thinking nature responsible for Mr. Wyndham's manners."

Mrs. Dixon Barnett disapproved of Katherine, but she joined in here with a guttural assent.

"Poor man!" said Miss Gladys Armstrong. "He certainly hasn't improved since that affair with Miss Fraser."

Audrey looked up suddenly. "What affair?"

"Don't you know? They were engaged a long time, wedding-day fixed, and everything, when she broke it off suddenly, without a word of warning."

"Why?"

"Why, indeed! She left her reasons to the imagination."

"When did it happen?"

"Just about this time last year. I can't think what made her do it, unless she had a turn for psychical research—raking in the ashes of his past, and that sort of thing."

"Was he very much cut up about it?"

"He didn't whine. But he's got an ugly wound somewhere about him. Curious man, Langley Wyndham. I haven't got to the bottom of him yet; and I flatter myself I know most men. My diagnosis is generally pretty correct. He's a very interesting type."

"Very," said Audrey, below her breath. The novelist knitted her brows and fell into a reverie. Her interest in Langley Wyndham was not a purely professional one. Audrey reflected, too. "Just about this time last year. That might account for things." She would have liked to ask more; but further discussion of his history was cut short by the entrance of Wyndham himself, followed by the rest.

Mr. Flaxman Reed was the first to take the empty seat by Audrey's side. He remembered the talk he had with her at Oxford—that talk which had provoked Wyndham's sarcastic comments. Himself a strange compound of intellectual subtlety and broad simplicity of character, he had taken Audrey's utterances in good faith. She had spoken to him of spiritual things, in one of those moments of self-revelation which, he knew well, come suddenly to those—especially to women—whose inner life is troubled. But this was not the atmosphere to revive such themes in. He had no part in Audrey's and in Wyndham's world—the world which

cared nothing for the principles he represented, those two great ideals which he served in his spirit and his body—the unity of the church and the celibacy of the priesthood. But Audrey interested him. He had first met, last seen, her during a spiritual and intellectual crisis. He had stood alone then, severed from those dearest to him by troubled seas of controversy; and a word, a look, had passed which showed that she, this woman, sympathized with him. It was enough; there still clung to her the grave and tender associations of that time.

To-night the woman was unable to give him her whole-hearted attention. Audrey was disturbed and preoccupied. Ted was lounging at the back of her chair, hanging on her words; Wyndham and Miss Armstrong were sitting on the other side of her, and she felt herself straining every nerve to catch what they were saying.

"Yes," said Miss Armstrong, in the tone of a proud parent, "'Through Fire to Moloch' was my first. In that book I threw down the gauntlet to society. It shrugged its shoulders and took no notice. My second, 'Sour Grapes,' was a back-hander in its face. It shrieked that time, but it read 'Sour Grapes.'"

"Which at once increased the demand for 'Through Fire to Moloch.' I congratulate you."

Miss Armstrong ignored the impertinent parenthesis. "The critics abused me, but I expected that. They are men, and it was the men I exposed—"

Knowles, who was standing near, smiled, and blushed when he caught himself smiling. Wyndham laughed frankly at his confusion, and Audrey grew hot and cold by turns. What was the dreadful joke those two had about Miss Armstrong? She leaned back and looked up at Ted sweetly.

"Ted, I should like to introduce you to Mr. Knowles. He'll tell you all about that illustrated thing you wanted to get on to."

"I'm afraid," said Knowles, "that's not in my line; I don't know anything about any illustrated things."

"Well, never mind; I wanted you to

know something about Mr. Haviland, anyhow."

This was just what Knowles wanted himself. He was deeply interested in the situation as far as he understood it, and he looked forward to its development. This little diversion created, Miss Armstrong continued with imperturbable calm. But Audrey, listening with one ear to Mr. Flaxman Reed, only heard the livelier parts of the dialogue.

"Life isn't all starched linen and eau de Cologne," said Miss Armstrong, sententiously.

"Did I ever say it was?" returned Wyndham.

"Virtually you do. You turn your back on average humanity."

"Pardon me, I do nothing of the kind. I use discrimination."

"Nature has no discrimination."

"Exactly. And nature has no consideration for our feelings, and very little maidenly reserve. Therefore, we've invented art."

Audrey leaned forward eagerly. She felt an unusual exaltation. At last she was in the center of intellectual life, carried on by the whirl of ideas. She answered her companion at random.

"Yes," Mr. Flaxman Reed was saying, "my work is disheartening. Half my parish are animals, brutalized by starvation, degraded out of all likeness to men and women."

"How dreadful! What hard work it must be!"

"Hard enough to find decent food and clothing for their bodies. But to have to 'create a soul under those ribs of death'——" he paused. His voice seemed suddenly to run dry.

"Yes," said Audrey, in her buoyant staccato, "I can't think how you manage it."

There was a moment of silence. Wyndham had turned from Miss Armstrong; Knowles and Ted had long ago joined Miss Haviland at the other end of the room, where Mr. Dixon Barnett, still irresistibly attracted by Katherine, hovered round and round the little group, with the fatal "desire of the moth for the star." Audrey stood up; Miss

Armstrong was holding out her hand and pleading a further engagement. The little woman looked sour and ruffled: Wyndham's manner had acted on her like vinegar on milk. She was followed by Mr. Flaxman Reed. Wyndham dropped into the seat he left.

"Dixon," said Mrs. Barnett, in a low voice which the explorer knew and obeyed. They were going on to a large "At Home."

Audrey turned to Wyndham with a smile. "I hope you are not going to follow them, Mr. Wyndham?"

"No; I'm not a person of many engagements, I'm thankful to say. Barnett hasn't much the cut of a great explorer, has he?"

"No; but those wiry little men can go through a great deal."

"A very great deal. Is Mrs. Barnett a friend of yours?"

"No, not especially. Why?"

"Mere curiosity. That mouth of hers ought to have a bit in it. It's enough to send any man exploring in Central Asia. I can understand Barnett's mania for regions untrod by the foot of man—or woman."

Audrey laughed a little nervously. "I made a mistake in introducing him to Miss Haviland."

"It was a little cruel of you. But not half so unkind as asking Miss Armstrong to meet Knowles. That was a refinement of cruelty."

"Why? What have I done? Tell me."

"Didn't you know that Knowles went for Miss Armstrong in last week's *Piccadilly*? Criticized, witticized, slaughtered, and utterly made game of her?"

"No! I'd no idea! I thought they'd be delighted to meet each other; and I know so few really clever people, you know" (this rather plaintively). "He does cut up people so dreadfully, too."

"He cut her up into very small pieces. Knowles does these things artistically. He's so urbane in his brutality; that's what makes it so crushing. Are you an admirer of Miss Armstrong?"

He looked her full in the face, and Audrey blushed. She had read Miss Armstrong's works, and liked them, be-

cause it was the fashion; but not for worlds would she have admitted the fact now.

"I don't think I am. I've not read *all* her books."

"*Did* you like them?"

"I—I hardly know. She's written so many, and I can't understand them—at least, not all of them."

Wyndham smiled. She had read all of them, then.

"I'm glad to hear it. I can't understand them myself; but I detest them, all the same."

"I thought so. I saw you were having an argument with her."

"Oh, as for that, I agreed with her—with her theory, that is, not with her practise; that's execrable. But whatever she says I always want to support the other side."

He changed the subject, much to Audrey's relief.

"I think you knew Mr. Flaxman Reed at Oxford?"

"Yes, slightly. He's an old friend of my uncle's."

"There's something infinitely pathetic about him. I've an immense respect for him—probably because I don't understand him. I was surprised to meet him here."

"Really, you are very uncomplimentary to me."

"Am I? Mr. Reed has renounced all the pleasant things of life—hence my astonishment at seeing him here. Do you find him easy to get on with?"

"Perfectly." She became absorbed in picking the broken feathers out of her fan. She took no interest in Mr. Flaxman Reed. What she wanted was to be roused, stimulated by contact with a great intellect; and the precious opportunity was slipping minute by minute from her grasp. Wyndham was wasting it in deliberate trivialities. She longed to draw him into some subject, large and deep, where their sympathies could touch, their thoughts expand and intermingle. She continued tentatively, with a suggestion of self-restrained suffering in her voice: "I don't think I have any right to discuss Mr. Reed.

You know—I have no firm faith, no settled opinions."

It was an opening into the larger air, a very little one; she had no knowledge or skill to make it bigger, but she was determined to show herself a woman abreast of her time. Wyndham leaned back and looked at her through half-opened eyelids.

"You are no longer convinced of the splendid logic of the Roman faith?"

She started. His words recalled vividly that evening at Oxford, though she would not have recognized them as hers but for the quotation marks indicated by Wyndham's tone.

"No—that was a year ago. What did you know about me then?"

"Nothing. I divined much."

"You are right. How well you remember!" She leaned forward. Her face was animated, eager, in its greed of sympathy, understanding, acknowledgment. Clear and insistent, with a note as of delicate irony, the little porcelain clock in the corner sounded eleven. Knowles and others were making a move. Wyndham rose.

"I remember most things worth remembering."

Five minutes afterward Audrey, wrapt in thought, was still standing where Wyndham had left her. Miss Craven and Katherine had gone upstairs, and she was alone with Ted. Suddenly she clenched her hands together, at the full length of her white arms, and turned to him in an agony of tenderness, clinging to him like an overwrought child, and lavishing more sweetness on him than she had done since the day of their engagement. Ted was touched with the unusual pathos of her manner. He put it down to sorrow at their separation during the whole of a long evening.

CHAPTER X.

It was the third week in August; summer was dying, as a London summer dies, in days of feverish sunlight and breathless languor. Everywhere there was the same torpor, the same worn-out, desiccated life in death. It

was in the streets with their sultry palor, in the parks and squares where the dust lay like a gray blight on every green thing. Everywhere the glare accentuated this toneless melancholy. It was the symbol of the decadence following the brilliant efflorescence of the season, the exhaustion after that supreme effort of society to amuse itself. This lassitude is felt most by those who have shared least in the amusement, the workers who must stay behind in the great workshop because they are too busy or too poor to leave it.

There was one worker, however, who felt nothing of this depression. Langley Wyndham had reasons for congratulating himself that everybody was out of town, and that he was left to himself in his rooms in Dover Street. For one thing, it gave him opportunity for cultivating Miss Craven's acquaintance. For another, he had now a luxurious leisure in which to polish up the proofs of his last novel, and to arrange his ideas for its successor. Compared with this great work, all former efforts would seem to the taste they had created as so much literary trifling. Hitherto he had been merely trying his instrument, running his fingers over the keys in his easy professional way; but these preliminary flourishes gave no idea of the constructive harmonies to follow. And now on a dull evening, some three weeks after Audrey's dinner-party, he was alone in his study, smoking, as he leaned back in his easy chair, in one of those dreamy moods which with him meant fiction in the making, the tobacco-smoke curling round his head the Pythian fumes of his inspiration. The study was curiously suggestive of its owner's inconsistencies. With its silk cushions, oriental rugs, and velvet draperies, its lining of books, and writing-table heaped with manuscripts and proofs, it witnessed to his impartial love of luxury and hard work. It told other secrets, too. The cigar-case on the table beside him was embroidered by a woman's hand, the initials L. W. worked with gold thread in a raised monogram. Two or three photographs of pretty women were stuck by their

corners behind the big looking-glass over the fireplace, together with invitation cards, frivolous little notes, and ball programs. On one end of the mantel-board there was a photograph of Knowles; on the other, the one nearest Wyndham's chair, an empty frame of solid silver. The photograph and the frame represented the friendship and the love of his life.

To-night he had left his proofs untouched on the writing-table, and had settled himself comfortably to his pipe, with the voluptuous satisfaction of a man who has put off a disagreeable duty. He felt that delicious turmoil of ideas which with him accompanied the building up of a story round its central character. Not that he yet understood that character. Wyndham had his intuitions, but he was not the man to trust them as such; it was his habit to verify them by a subsequent logic. His literary conscience allowed nothing to take the place of the experimental method, the careful observation, and arranging of minute facts, intimate analytical study from the life. No action was too small, no emotion too insignificant, for his uncompromising realism. He had applied the same method to his own experience. Whatever came in his way, the tragedy or comedy of his daily life, his moods of passion and apathy, the aspirations of his better moments, all underwent the same disintegrating process. He had the power of standing aloof from himself, of arresting the flight of his own sensations, and criticizing his own actions as a disinterested spectator. Thus he made no experiment on others that he had not first tried on his own person. If any man ever understood himself, that man was Langley Wyndham. He was by no means vain of this distinction; on the contrary, he would have said that as a man's inner consciousness is the only thing he has any direct knowledge of, he must be a fool if he can live with himself—the closest of all human relations—for thirty-five years without understanding his own character.

What he really prided himself on was his knowledge of other people, especial-

ly of women. Unfortunately, for the first few years of his literary life he knew no women intimately; he had many acquaintances among them, a few enemies, but no friends; and the little he knew of individuals had not tended to raise his opinion of women in general. Consequently he drew them all, as he saw them, from the outside; the best sort with a certain delicacy and clearness of outline, the result of unerring eyesight and the gift of style; the worst sort with an incisive, almost brutal touch that suggested the black lines bitten out by some powerful acid. His work "took" because of its coarser qualities, the accentuated bitterness, the startling irony, the vigorous, characteristic phrase. Those black strokes were not introduced to throw up the gray wash or penciled shading; Wyndham's cynicism was no mere literary affectation; it was engrained in his very nature. He had gone through many phases of disillusionment (including disgust at his own success) before that brief crisis of feeling which ended in his engagement to Miss Fraser. Then, for the first time in his life, a woman's nature had been given to him to know. It was a glorious opportunity for the born analyst; and for the first time in his life he let an opportunity go. He loved Alison Fraser, and he found that love made understanding impossible. He never wanted to understand her; the relentless passion for analysis was absorbed in a comprehensive enthusiasm which embraced the whole of Alison and took no count of the parts. To have pulled her to pieces, even with a view to reconstruction, would have been a profanation of her and of his love. For a whole year the student of the earthly and the visible lived on the substance of things unseen—on faith in the goodness of Alison Fraser. By a peculiar irony it was her very goodness—for she was a good woman—which made her give up Wyndham. As Miss Gladys Armstrong had guessed (or, as she would have put it, diagnosed), a detail of Wyndham's past life had come to Miss Fraser's knowledge, as these details always come, through a well-mean-

ing friend. It was one which made it difficult for her to reconcile her marriage with Wyndham to her conscience. And because she loved him, because the thought of him, so hard to other women, so tender to herself, fascinated her reason and paralyzed her will—flattering the egoism inherent even in the very good—because she was weak and he was irresistibly strong, she cut herself from him deliberately, open-eyed, and with one stroke. She had just sufficient strength for the sudden breaking off of their engagement, none for explanation, and none, alas! to save her from regretting her act of supererogatory virtue.

Wyndham gave no sign of suffering. He simply sank back into himself, and became the man he had been before, plus his experience of feeling, and minus the ingenuousness of his self-knowledge. He took instead to self-mystification, trying to persuade himself that because he could not have Alison, Alison was not worth having. After that, it was but a step to palming off on his reason the monstrous syllogism that because Alison was unworthy, and Alison was a woman, therefore all women were unworthy. Except for purely literary purposes, he had done with the sex. He became if anything more intently, more remorselessly analytical, more absolutely the student of human nature. He lived now in and for his work.

He struck out into new paths; he was tired of his neutral washes and striking effects in black and white. He had begun to dream of glorious subtleties of design and color. Novels were lying in his head ten deep. He had whole notebooks full of germs and embryos, all neatly arranged in their separate pigeonholes. In some he had jotted down a name and a date, or a word which stood for a whole train of ideas. In others he had recorded some illustration as it occurred to him; or a single sentence stood flanked by a dozen variants—Wyndham being a careful worker and sensitive to niceties of language. Tonight he was supremely happy. He saw his way to a lovely little bit of psychological realism. All that had been hith-

erto wanting to this particular development of his art had been the woman. In Audrey Craven he had found the indispensable thing—intimacy without love, or even, as he understood the word, friendship. She was the type he had long desired, the feminine creature artless in perpetual artifice, forever revealing herself in a succession of disguises.

He was beginning to adjust his latest impressions to his earlier idea of her. He recalled the evening when he had first seen her—the hot, crowded drawing-room, the heavy atmosphere, the dull faces coming and going, and the figure of Audrey flashing through it all. She had irritated him then, for he had not yet classified her. He had tried not to think of her. She dogged his thoughts with most unmaidenly insistence; her image lay in wait for him at every cross-road of association; it was something vivid yet elusive, protean yet persistent. He recalled that other evening of her dinner-party—their first recognized meeting. Her whole person, which at first sight had impressed him with its emphatic individuality, now struck him as characterless and conventional. And yet—what was she like? She was like a chameleon. No, she wasn't; he recollected that the change of color was a vital process in that animal. She was like an opal—all sparkle when you move it, and at rest dull, most undeniably dull. No, *that* wasn't it exactly. She was a looking-glass for other people's personalities (he hated the horrid word, and apologized to himself for using it), formless and colorless, reflecting form and color. After a moment's satisfaction with this last fancy, he became aware that he was being made the fool of metaphor. That was not his way. To find out what lay at the bottom of this shifting personality, what elemental thoughts and feelings, if any, the real Audrey was composed of; to see for himself the play of circumstances on her plastic nature, and know what reaction it was capable of—in a word, to experimentalize in cold blood on the living nerve and brain tissue, was his plan of work for the year 1896.

Making a mental note of several of the above phrases for future use, Wyndham knocked the ashes out of his pipe and went to bed, where he dreamed that the devil, in evening dress, was presenting him with Audrey's soul—done up in a brown wrapper marked "MS. only"—for dissection.

CHAPTER XI.

It was in no direct accordance with his literary plans, though it may have been preordained in some divine scheme of chances, that Wyndham found himself next Sunday attending evensong at St. Teresa's, Lambeth. It so happened that Audrey and the Havilands had chosen that very evening to go and hear, or, as Ted expressed it, see Flaxman Reed. He wanted Flaxman Reed's head for a study. Ted seldom condescended to enter any church of later date than the fifteenth century, and, architecturally speaking, he feared the worst from St. Teresa's. Indeed, smoke, fog, and modern Gothic genius have made the outside of that building one with the grimy street it stands in, and Ted was not prepared for the golden beauty of the interior. His judgment halted as if some magic effect of color had blinded it to stunted form and pitiful perspective. But the glory of St. Teresa's is its music. The three late-comers were shown into seats in the chancel as the choir were singing the Magnificat. Music was the one art to which Audrey's nature responded spontaneously after its kind. She knelt down and covered her face with her hands for a prayer's space, while the voices of the choir and organ shook her on every side with a palpable vibration. She was conscious then of a deep sense of religion merging in a faint expectancy, a premonition of things to follow. She rose from her knees and found an explanation of this in the fact that Langley Wyndham was standing in the opposite seat below the choir. She was not surprised; for her the unexpected was always about to happen. It had happened now.

She tried not to see or think of him; but she felt him as something illuminating and intensifying her consciousness. She heard the vicar's voice like fine music playing in the background. Then organ and choir burst into the anthem. It was a fugue; the voices seemed to have gathered together from the ends of the world, flying, pursuing and flying, doubled, trebled, quadrupled in their flight, they met and parted, they overtook and were overtaken. And now it was no longer a fugue of sounds—it was a fugue of all sensations. The incense rose and mingled with the music; the music fled and rose, up among the clustering gas-jets, up to the chancel roof, where it lost itself in a shimmering labyrinth of gold and sapphire, and died in a diminuendo of light and sound. Audrey looked up, and as her eyes met Wyndham's it seemed as if a new and passionate theme had crashed into her fugue, dominating its harmonies, while the whole rushed on, more intricate, more tumultuous, than before. Her individuality that had swum with the stream became fluent and coalesced with it now, soul flooded with sense, and sense with soul. She came to herself exhausted and shivering with cold. Flaxman Reed was in the pulpit. He stood motionless, with compressed lips and flashing eyes, as he watched the last deserters softly filing out through the side aisles. The lights were turned low in nave and chancel; Ted wriggled in his seat until he commanded a good view of the fine head, in faint relief against a gray-white pillar, stone on stone; and Flaxman Reed flung out his text like a challenge to the world: "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." The words suggested something piquantly metaphysical, magnificently vague; and Audrey followed the sermon a little way. But Flaxman Reed was in his austerest, most militant mood. He was a master of antithesis, and to Audrey there was something repellent in his steel-clad thoughts, his clear, diamond-pointed sentences. No eloquence had any charm for her that was not as water

to reflect her image, or as wind to lift and carry her along. Her fancy soon fluttered gently down to earth, and she caught herself wondering whether Wyndham would walk back to Piccadilly or go in a hansom.

She was still pursuing this train of thought as they left the church, when she proposed that they should go back to Chelsea by Westminster instead of Lambeth Bridge. Wyndham overtook them as they turned down to the river by St. Thomas' Hospital. He stopped while Audrey pointed out the beauty of the scene with her little air of unique appreciation. "Isn't it too lovely for words? The suggestion—the mystery of it!" Her voice had a passionate impatience, as if she chafed at the limitations of the language. "Who says London's cold and gray? It's blue. And yet what would it be without the haze?" Wyndham smiled inscrutably—perhaps he wondered what Miss Audrey Craven would be without the haze?

"What did you think of the service?" she asked presently. By this time she and Wyndham were walking together a little in advance of the others.

"I didn't hear it. I was watching Flaxman Reed all the time." This statement, as Audrey well knew, was not strictly correct.

"So was I. My uncle says if he stays in the church he'll be the coming man."

"The coming man? H'm. He's been going back ever since I knew him. At present he's got to the thirteenth century; he may arrive at the Nicene age, but he'll never have a hold on his own. He's nothing but a holy anachronism."

"Oh! I thought you didn't understand him?"

"In one way I do, in another I don't. You see, I knew him at Oxford, when I was a happy undergraduate." (Audrey could not imagine Langley Wyndham ever being an undergraduate; it seemed to her that he must always have been a Master of Arts.) "I knew the real Flaxman Reed, and he was as logical a skeptic as you or I. There was an epidemic of ideas in our time, and the poor fellow was frightened, so he

took it—badly. Of course he made up his mind that he was going to die, and he was horribly afraid of dying. So instead of talking about his interesting symptoms, as you or I might do" ("You or I"—again that flattering association!), "he quickly got rid of the disease by attacking its source."

"How?"

"Well, I forget the precise treatment, but I think he took equal parts of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, diluted with *aqua sacra*. He gave me the prescription, but I preferred the disease."

"At any rate, he was in earnest."

"Deadly earnest. That's the piety of the fraud."

"You surely don't call him a fraud?"

"Well—a self-deceiver. Isn't that the completest and most fatal form of fraud? He fights and struggles to be what he isn't, and calls it renouncing self."

"He renounces the world, too—and everything that's pleasant."

"I'm afraid that doesn't impress me. I can't forget that he renounced reason because it was unpleasant. Rather than bear a little spiritual neuralgia, he killed the nerve of thought."

"How terrible!" said Audrey, though she had no very precise notion of what was involved in that operation.

"To us—not to him. Yet he talks about doing good work for his generation."

"Why shouldn't he? He works hard enough."

"Unfortunately, his generation doesn't want his work, or him either. It's too irrevocably pledged to reality. There's one thing about him, though—his magnificent personality. I believe he has unlimited influence over some men and most women."

Audrey ignored the last suggestion. "You seem to find him very interesting."

"He is profoundly interesting. Not in himself so much, but in his associations. Do you know, when I saw you in church to-night it struck me that he might possibly influence you?"

"Never! I should have to give up my intellect first, I suppose. I'm not prepared to do that." Wyndham smiled again. "Why, what made you think he would influence me?"

"I'd no right to think anything at all about it, but I know some women take him for a hierophant."

"Some women? Do you think I'm like them?"

"You are like nothing but yourself. I was only afraid that he might persuade you to renounce yourself and become somebody else, which would be a pity."

"Don't be alarmed. I'm not so impressionable as you think."

"Aren't you? Be frank. Didn't you feel to-night that he might have a revelation for you?"

"No. And yet it's odd you should say so. I have felt that, but—not with him. I shall never come under that influence."

"I hope not." (It was delightful to have Langley Wyndham "hoping" and being "afraid" for her.) "He belongs to the dead—you to the living."

What a thing it is to have a sense of style, to know the words that consecrate a moment! They were crossing Westminster Bridge now, and Audrey looked back. On the Lambeth end of the bridge Ted and Katherine were leaning over the parapet; she looked at them as she might have looked at two figures in a crowd. Lambeth and St. Teresa's seemed very far away. She said so, and her tone implied that she had left illusion behind her on the Surrey side.

Wyndham said good-by at Westminster. Audrey was not quite pleased with his manner of hailing a hansom; it implied a conscious loss of valuable time.

"What fools we were to let him catch us up," said Ted, as they walked toward Pimlico. Audrey made no answer. She was saying to herself that Langley Wyndham had read her, and—well, she hardly thought he would take the trouble to read anything that was not interesting.

CHAPTER XII.

Audrey had made a faint protest against Wyndham's realistic presentation of Flaxman Reed. In doing so she was not guided by any insight into the character of that divine, or by any sympathy with his aims. Indeed, she could not have understood him if she had tried. Her thoughts had never traveled along that avenue of time down which Wyndham had tracked his pathetic figure to the thirteenth century. She merely wanted to avoid a slavish acquiescence in Wyndham's view, to guard a characteristic intellectual attitude. Intellect has its responsibilities, and she was anxious to show herself impartial. In all this Flaxman Reed counted for nothing. It was intolerable to her that Wyndham should have classed her, even for a moment, with those weak, emotional creatures who submitted to his influence. Why, he might just as well have said that she was influenced by Ted Haviland; the fact being that no engaged woman ever preserved her independence more completely than she had done. Had devotion to Ted interfered with her appreciation of Wyndham? Then she reflected that Wyndham did not know about her engagement any more than other people.

So when Mr. Flaxman Reed called, as he did on Monday afternoon, Audrey met him with a mind secure against any malignant charm. His most innocent remarks excited her suspicion.

"I'm glad you've found your way to St. Teresa's. We don't often get such a strong contingent from the other side." By "the other side" Mr. Reed meant Middlesex, but to Audrey the phrase was insidiously controversial. She determined to take her stand once and for all.

"I'm afraid my heterodoxy is incorrigible. So, I should say, is Mr. Langley Wyndham's."

The vicar raised his eyebrows in mild surprise. "I don't know why *he* came—unless it was for old acquaintance's sake."

"Ah! you knew him, didn't you? Do

tell me about him. He's public property, you know."

"I dare say, but I have no right to discuss him. We hardly ever meet now; if we did we shouldn't agree. We are enigmas to each other."

"Yes," she said meditatively, and with a faint reproduction of Wyndham's manner, "I should say you would be. He belongs so essentially to the present, don't you think?"

Flaxman Reed flushed painfully. "And I to the past—is that what you mean?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"You may be right. I suppose he is very modern—a decadent who would rather die with his day than live an hour behind it—who can't see that the future may have more kindred with the past than with the present. Mind you, I'm not talking of him, but of his school."

"Then you read him? Of course—everybody reads him."

"I've not much time for any reading that lies outside my work. But I read his first book when it came out. Is it from him you get what you call your heterodoxy?"

"No. You have to think these things out for yourself."

Audrey was led into making this statement simply by the desire to please. That eternally feminine instinct told her that at the moment she would be most interesting to Flaxman Reed in the character of a forlorn skeptic. His face sharpened with a sudden distress.

"What, have you got the malady of the century—the disease of thought? Surely this is something new?"

"It is. One can't go on forever in the old grooves. One must think."

"Yes; that curse is laid upon us for our sins."

Audrey smiled a bitter smile, as much as to say that she must have committed some awful crime to be so tormented with intellect as she was.

"I suppose," he continued guilelessly, "every earnest mind must go through this sooner or later."

"Yes; but I've come out on what

you call the other side. I can't go back, can I?"

"No; but you can go round."

Audrey shook her head sadly, feeling all the time how nice it was to be taken seriously.

"Why not? Why not compromise? What is life but compromise? What else is my own position as an Anglican priest? I dare say you know that my heart is not altogether with the church I serve?" He checked himself; he had not meant to strike this personal note. And how could he explain the yearning of his heart for the great heart of the mother-church? This would have been possible last year at Oxford, but not now. "I tell you this because I feel that it might, perhaps, help you."

"No; I know what you will say next. You will tell me to stop thinking because it hurts me."

"I won't. You will go on thinking in spite of me. But your intellect will be feeding on itself. You will get no further. Thought can never be satisfied with thought."

Flaxman Reed was only a simple, pure-minded priest, but Wyndham himself could not have chosen words more subtly calculated to establish the "influence." To have two such champions battling for possession of her soul was exciting enough in all conscience, but she was inexpressibly flattered by that dramatic conception of herself as a restless intellect struggling with the storms of doubt. It would be hard to say how Flaxman Reed came to believe in any real passion of thought behind Audrey's spiritual coquetry. His ministration to a living illusion was almost as touching as his devotion to a dead ideal. But Audrey herself was too completely the thrall of the illusion to feel compunction.

There was no voice to warn him that his enthusiasm was the prey of the eternal vanity. He leaned back in his meditative hieratic attitude, his elbows resting on the arm of his chair, his thin hands joined at the finger-tips, wondering what he should say to help her. After all, Audrey had stated her case a little vaguely—there was a reticence as

to details. These, however, he easily supplied from his own experience, supposing hers to have been more or less like it. He said he wished he had known of this before, that he had spoken sooner, wincing perceptibly as Audrey pointed out the inexpediency of discussing eternal things on so temporal an occasion as her dinner-party. He did not mean that. His time now was short; he had a stupid parish meeting at five o'clock. He went rapidly over the ground, past immemorial stumbling-stones of thought, refuting current theories, suggesting lines of reading; in his excitement he even recommended some slight study of Patristics. There was nothing like getting to the sources—Polycarp and Irenæus were important; or he could lend her Lightfoot. But he did not want to overwhelm her with dogmas—mere matter for the intellect—he would prefer her to accept some truths provisionally, and see how they worked out. After all, the working out was everything. He wanted her to see that it was a question of will. In the crisis of his own life he had helped himself most by helping others—practically, he meant—seeing after his poor people, and so on. Didn't she think it might be the same with her?

Audrey looked grave. It was good to be taken seriously, but this was going a little too far.

Didn't she think she could "do something? Other ladies——"

Flaxman Reed was doing well, very well, indeed, but he had spoiled it all by that hopelessly inartistic touch. Any man of the world could have told him that to mention "other ladies" to Audrey—to take her out of the circle of supreme intelligences in which he had placed her ten minutes ago, and to confuse her with the rank and file of parochial underlings and hangers-on—was death to the "influence." It was an insult to her glorious womanhood. Some people might even have objected that such crass ignorance of the world he renounced detracted from the merit of the renunciation. Her voice was very cold and distant as she answered him.

"What do you suppose I could do? If you mean slumming, I've never been down a slum in my life." No, he didn't mean slumming exactly. To tell the truth, he could not fancy Audrey mingling with the brutal side of life. He would have shrunk from giving her work that he committed without a pang to his deaconesses and sisters.

"Do you mean mothers' meetings, then, and that sort of thing? I couldn't."

No, he didn't mean mothers' meetings, either. But he thought she might like to come sometimes to their social evenings.

"Social evenings"—that was worse than all. He had plunged in his nervousness to the lowermost bathos. Audrey saw that he looked puzzled and disheartened. She crossed over to her writing-desk, wrote out a check for five pounds, and gave it to him with the prettiest action in the world. "I want you to take that for your poor people. I wish I could help in some other way, but I can't. I am so sorry." The apology was sweetness itself, but she had the air of having settled her account with humanity—and him. He thanked her gravely and took his leave, reminding her that whenever she needed his help, it would still be there. She remained musing some time after he had gone.

He little guessed how nearly he had won the victory. Perhaps he would have scorned any advantage gained by an appeal to her sex, though he had conceded much to it—more than he well knew.

CHAPTER XIII.

August was a miserable month for Katherine in the hot attic, hard at work on her own pictures, and too often finishing the various orders for black and white which Knowles had, after all, managed to put in Ted's way. She could have stood the hard work if she had not been more than ever worried on Ted's account. With her feminine instinct sharpened by affection, she foresaw trouble at hand—complications which it would never have entered into

the boy's head to consider. For reasons of her own Audrey was still keeping her engagement a secret. She was less regular, too, in making appointments, fixing days for Ted to go over and see her; and more often than not he missed her if he happened to call at Chelsea Gardens of his own accord. At the same time, she came to Devon Street as often as, or oftener than, ever, and there her manner to Ted had all its old charm, with something added; it was more deeply, more seriously affectionate than before. And yet it was just in these tender passages that Katherine detected the change of key. That tenderness was not remorse, as she might have supposed. It had nothing to do with the past, being purely an emotion of the passing moment. Audrey was playing a new part. Her mind was swayed by a fresh current of ideas; it had suffered the invasion of a foreign personality. The evidence for this was purely psychological, but it all pointed one way. A sudden display of new interests, a startling phrase, a word hitherto unknown in Audrey's vocabulary, her way of handling a book, the alternate excitement and preoccupation of her manner, they were all unmistakable. Katherine had noticed the same signs in the days of Audrey's first absorption in Ted. She had caught his tricks, his idioms, his way of thinking. She had even begun to see, like Ted, the humor of things, and to make reckless speeches, not quite like Ted, that shocked Cousin Bella's sense of propriety. Katherine had smiled at her innocent plagiarism, and wondered at the transforming power of love. And now—Audrey was actually undergoing another metempsychosis. Under whose influence? Here again Katherine's instinct was correct. It was Wyndham's presence that in three weeks had brought about the change. Yes; in that impressive affection, in the pleading tremor of her voice, in her smiles and caresses, Audrey was acting a part before one invisible spectator. She played as if Wyndham were standing by and looking on. Her love for Ted had been a reality; therefore it served as a

standard to measure all emotions by—it made this new passion of the imagination a thing of flesh and blood. No wonder that she would not announce her engagement. At the best of times her fluent nature shrank from everything that was fixed and irrevocable—above all, from the act of will that trammelled her wandering fancy, the finality that limited her outlook upon life. And now it was impossible. The three weeks in which she had known Wyndham had shown her that, compared with that complex character, that finished intellect, Ted was indeed little better than a baby. Not that she could have done without Ted—far from it. As yet Wyndham was still the unknown, shadowy, far-off, and unapproachable. The touch of Ted's hand seemed to make him living, to bring him nearer to her. Ted still stood between her and the void where there is no more revelation, no hope, no love—and Hardy would be in London in another week.

Katherine had not guessed all the truth, any more than Audrey had herself; but she had guessed enough to make her extremely anxious. Audrey was not the wife she could have wished for Ted—she disapproved of his marriage with her as a certain hindrance to his career; but, above all, she dreaded for him the agony of disappointment which must follow if Audrey gave him up. She had no very clear idea of what it would mean to him; but, judging his nature by what she had seen of it, she feared some shock either to his moral system or to his artistic powers. She longed to speak to him about it; but Ted and she were not accustomed to handling their emotions, and of late they had avoided all personal questions not susceptible of humorous treatment. After this persistent choosing of the shallows, she shrank from a sudden plunge into the depths. She felt strongly, and with her strong feeling was a bar to utterance.

At last an incident occurred which laid the subject open to frivolous discussion.

Katherine was painting one after-

noon, and Ted was leaning out of the window, which looked southwest to Chelsea, his thoughts traveling in a bee-line toward the little brown house. Suddenly he drew his head in with an exclamation.

"Uncle James, by Jove! He'll be upon us in another minute. I'm off!" And he made a rush for his bedroom.

Katherine had only time to wipe the paint from her brush, to throw a tablecloth over the Apollo and a mackintosh over the divine shoulders of the Venus—Mr. Pigott was a purist in art, and Katherine respected his prejudices—when her uncle arrived, panting and inarticulate.

"Well, uncle, this is a surprise! How are you?"

"No better for climbing up that precipice of yours. What on earth possessed you to come to this out-of-the-way hole?"

"It's a good room for painting, you see—"

"What's that? Couldn't you find a good room in West Kensington, instead of planting yourself up here away from us all?"

This was a standing grievance, as Katherine knew.

"Well, you see, it's nicer here by the river, and it's cheaper, too; and—how's Aunt Kate?"

"Your Aunt Kate has got a sty in her eye."

"Dear me, I'm very sorry to hear it. And you, uncle?"

"Poorly, very poorly. I ought not to have got out of my bed to-day. One of my old attacks. My liver's never been the same since I caught that bad chill at your father's funeral."

Uncle James looked at Katherine severely, as if she had been to blame for the calamity. His feeling was natural. One way or another, the Havilands had been the cause of calamity in the family ever since they came into it. Family worship and the worship of the family were different but equally indispensable forms of the one true religion. The stigma of schism, if not of atheism, attached to the Havilands in departing

from the old traditions and forming a little sect by themselves. Mr. Pigott meant well by them; at any time he would have helped them substantially, in such a manner as he thought fit. But, one and all, the Havilands had refused to be benefited in any way but their own; their own way, in the Pigotts' opinion, being invariably a foolish one—"between you and me, sir, they hadn't a sound business head among them." As for Ted and Katherine, before the day when he had washed his hands of Ted in the office lavatory, Uncle James had tried to play the part of an overruling Providence in their affairs; and the young infidels had signified their utter disbelief in him. Since then he had ceased to interfere with his creatures; and latterly his finger was only to be seen at times of marked crisis or disturbance, as in the arrangement for a marriage or a funeral.

An astounding piece of news had come to his ears, which was the reason of his present visitation. He hastened to the business in hand.

"What's this that I hear about Ted, eh?"

"I don't know," said Katherine, blushing violently.

"I'm told that he's taken up with some woman, nobody knows who, and that they're seen everywhere together—"

"Who told you this?"

"Your Cousin Nettie. She's seen them—constantly—in the National Gallery and the British Museum, carrying on all the time they're pretending to look at those heathen gods and goddesses"—Katherine glanced nervously round the studio. "They actually make assignations—they meet on the steps of public places. Nettie has noticed her hanging about waiting for him, and some young friends of hers saw them dining together alone at the Star and Garter. Now, what's the meaning of all this?"

Katherine was too much amused to answer yet; she wanted to see what her uncle would say next. He shook his head solemnly.

"I knew what it would be when you

two had it all your own way. As for you, Katherine, you took a very grave responsibility on your shoulders when you persuaded your young brother to live with you here, in this neighborhood, away from all your relations. Your influence has been for anything but good."

"My dear uncle, you are so funny; but you're mistaken. I know Miss Craven, the lady you mean, perfectly well; she and Ted are great friends, and it's all right, I assure you."

"Do you mean to tell me he is engaged to this young lady he goes about with?"

Katherine hesitated—if she had felt inclined to gratify a curiosity which she considered impertinent—she was not at liberty to betray their secret.

"I can't tell you that, for I'm not supposed to know."

"Let me tell you, then, that it looks bad—very bad. To begin with, your Cousin Nettie strongly disapproves of the young woman's appearance, so loud and overdressed, evidently got up to attract. But it lies in a nutshell. If he's not engaged to her, why is he seen everywhere with her? If he is engaged to her, and she's a respectable woman—I say, if she's respectable, why doesn't he introduce her to his family? Why doesn't he ask your Aunt Kate to call on her?"

"Well, you see, supposing they are engaged, they wouldn't go and proclaim it all at once; and, in any case, that would depend more on Miss Craven than Ted. I can't tell you any more than I have done; and I'd be greatly obliged if you wouldn't allow Ted's affairs to be gossiped about by Cousin Nettie or anybody else."

She was relieved for the moment by the entrance of Mrs. Rogers with the tea-tray.

"Tea, uncle?"

"No, thank you; none of your cat-lap. I must see Ted himself. Where is he?"

"I'm not sure, but I *think* he's gone out."

Mrs. Rogers looked up from her tray, pleased to give valuable information.

"Mr. 'Aviland is in 'is bedroom, m'm; I 'eard 'im as I come up."

"Oh, I'll go and tell him, then."

She found Ted dressing himself carefully before calling on Audrey. She wasted five minutes in trying to persuade him to see his uncle. Ted was firm.

"Give him my very kindest regards, and tell him a pressing engagement alone prevents my waiting on him."

With that he ran merrily downstairs. His feet carried him very swiftly toward Audrey.

Katherine gave the message, with some modifications; and Mr. Pigott, seeing that no good was to be gained by staying, took his leave.

Ted came back sooner than his sister had expected. He smiled faintly at the absurd appearance of the Venus in her mackintosh, but he was evidently depressed. He looked mournfully at the tea-table.

"I'm afraid the tea's poison, Ted, and it's cold."

"It doesn't matter. I don't want any."

"Had tea at Audrey's?"

"No."

He strode impatiently to the table and took up one of the illustrations Katherine had been working at.

"What's up?" said she.

"Oh—er—for one thing, I've heard from the editor of the *Sunday Illustrated*. He's in a beastly bad temper, and says my last batch of illustrations isn't funny enough. The old duffer's bringing out a religious serial, and he must have humor to make it go down."

Katherine was relieved. To divert him, she told him the family's opinion as to his relations with Audrey. That raised his spirits so far that he called his uncle a "fantastic old gander," and his Cousin Nettie an "evil-minded little beast."

"After all, Ted," said Katherine judicially, "why does Audrey go on making a mystery of your engagement?"

"I don't know and I don't care," said Ted savagely.

Surely it was not in the power of that harmless person, the editor of the *Sun-*

day Illustrated, to move him so? Something must have happened.

What had happened was this: As Ted was going into the little brown house at Chelsea he had met Mr. Langley Wyndham coming out of it; and for the first time in his life he had found Audrey in a bad temper. She was annoyed, in the first place, because the novelist had been unable to stay to tea. She had provided a chocolate-cake on purpose, the eminent man having once approved of that delicacy. (It was a pretty way Audrey had, this remembering the likings of her friends.) She was also annoyed because Ted's coming had followed so immediately on Wyndham's going. It was her habit now, whenever she had seen Wyndham, to pass from the reality of his presence into a reverie which revived the sense of it; and Ted's arrival had interfered with this pastime. The first thing the boy did, too, was to wound her tenderest susceptibilities. He began playing with the books that lay beside her.

"What a literary cat it is!"

She frowned and drew in her breath quickly, as if in pain. He went on turning over the pages—it was Wyndham's "London Legends"—with irreverent fingers.

"I should very much like to know——" said Audrey to Ted, and stopped short.

"What would you very much like to know, Puss?"

"What you saw in me, to begin with."

"I haven't the remotest idea—unless it was your intellect."

"I should also like to know," said Audrey to the teapot, "why people fall in love."

"The taste is either natural or acquired. Some take to it because they like it; some are driven to it by a hereditary tendency or an unhappy home. I do it myself to drown care."

"Will you have any tea?" asked Audrey sternly.

"No, thank you, I won't."

She laughed, as she might have

laughed at a greedy child for revenging on its stomach the injury done to its heart. Poor Ted, he was fond of chocolate-cake, too! She would have given anything at that moment if she could have provoked him into quarreling with her.

Instead of quarreling, he stroked her beautiful hair as if she had been some soft but irritable animal. He said he was sure her dear little head was aching because she was so bad-tempered; he implored her not to eat too much cake, and promised to call again another day, when he hoped to find her better. So he left her, and went home with a dead weight at his heart.

Toward evening his misery became so acute that he could no longer keep it to himself. They were on the leads, in the long August twilight, Katherine sitting with her back against the tall chimney, watching the reflection of the sunset in the east, the boy lying at her feet, with his heels in the air and his head in the nasturtiums. The time, the place, the attitude, were all favorable to confidences, and Ted wound up his by asking Katherine what she thought of Audrey? Now was the moment to rid herself of the burden that weighed on her; Ted might never be in so favorable a mood again. She spoke very gently.

"Ted, I am going to hurt your feelings. I don't quite know how to tell you what I think of her. She's not good enough for you, to begin with—"

"I know she's not intelligent. She can't help that."

"And she's not affectionate. Oh, Ted, forgive me! but she doesn't love you—she can't, it's not in her. She loves no one but herself."

"She is a little selfish, but she can't help that, either. It makes no difference."

"So I fear. And then she's years older than you are, and you can't marry for ages; don't you see how impossible it all is?"

Her voice thrilled with her longing to impress him with her own conviction. His passion was wrestling with

a ghastly doubt, but it was of the kind that dies hard.

"Of course it's quite impossible now"—neither he nor Katherine considered the question of Audrey's money; they had never thought of it—"but, as she said herself, in five years' time, when she's thirty and I'm twenty-five, the difference in our ages won't be so marked."

"It will be as marked as ever, even if your intellect grows at its present rate of development."

"I've admitted that she's a little deficient in parts; and, as you justly observe, stupidity, like death, is leveling. We should suit each other exactly in time."

"Ah, if you can see that, why, oh, why, did you fall in love with her?"

"She asked me that this afternoon. I said it was because she was so clever. It was because I was a fool—stupidity came upon me like a madness—I wish to Heaven I'd never done it. It's played the devil with my chances. I was sitting calmly on the highroad to success, with my camp-stool and my little portable easel, not interfering in the least with the traffic, when she came along like a steam-roller, knocked me down, crushed me, and rolled me out flat. I shall never recover my natural shape; and as for the camp-stool and the portable easel—these things are an allegory. But I love her all the same."

Katherine laughed in spite of herself, but she understood the allegory. Would he ever recover his natural shape? To that end she was determined to make him face the worst.

"Ted, what would you do, supposing—only supposing—she were to fling you over for—for some one else?"

"I should blow my brains out, if I had any left. Verdict, suicide while in a state of temporary insanity."

"Suicide of a genius! That would be a fine feather in Audrey's cap."

"She always had exquisite taste in dress. Besides, she's welcome to it—or to any little trifle of the kind."

It was useless attempting to make any impression on him. She gave it up. Ted, however, was so charmed with the

idea of suicide that he spent the rest of the evening discussing ways and means. He was not going to blow his brains out, or to take poison in his bedroom, or do anything disagreeable that would depreciate Mrs. Rogers' property. On the whole, drowning was the cheapest, and would suit him best, if he could summon up spirits for it. Only he didn't want to spoil the river for *her*. It must be somewhere below London Bridge, say Wapping Old Stairs. Here Katherine suggested that he had better go to bed.

He went, and lay awake all night in a half-fever. When Katherine went into his room the next morning (ten o'clock had struck, and there was no appearance of Ted), she found him lying in a deep sleep; one arm was flung outside the counterpane, the hand had closed on a crumpled sheet of paper. It was Audrey's last note of invitation—the baby had taken it to bed with him.

"Poor boy—poor, poor Ted!"

But, for all her sympathy, love, the stupidity that comes on you like a madness, was a thing incomprehensible to Katherine.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next day Audrey's head was aching to some purpose. She had been going through a course of Langley Wyndham. Yesterday he had brought her his last book, "London Legends," and she had sat up half the night to read it. She was to tell him what she thought of it, and her ideas were in a whirl.

She stayed in bed for breakfast, excused herself from lunch, left word with the footman that she was not at home that afternoon, and sent down another message five minutes afterward that, if by any chance Mr. Wyndham were to call, he might be admitted. "Not that he's in the least likely to come after being here yesterday," she said to herself; and yet, as she sat alone in the drawing-room, she listened for the ringing of bells, the opening and shutting of doors, and the sound of footsteps on

the stairs. Every five minutes she looked at the clock, and her heart kept time to its ticking. Half-past two. In any case he wouldn't come before three; and yet—surely that was the front-door bell. No. Three o'clock, four o'clock—he would be more likely to drop in about tea-time. Five o'clock; tea came in on the stroke of it, and still no Wyndham. Half-past five—he had once called later than that when he wanted to find her alone. Something told her that he would come to-day. He would be anxious to know what she thought of his book. She was in that state of mind when people trust in intuitions, failing positive evidence. Surely in some past state of existence she had sat in that chair, surrounded by the same objects, thinking the same thoughts, and that train of ideas had been completed by the arrival of Wyndham. Science accounts for this sensation by supposing that one-half of the brain, more agile than another, jumps to its conclusion before its tardier fellow can arrive. To Audrey it was a prophecy certain of fulfilment. And all the time her head kept on aching. The poor little brain went on wandering in a maze of its own making. How truly she had, in Cousin Bella's phrase, "entangled herself" with Hardy, with Ted; and possibly, nay, probably, with Wyndham. She saw no escape from the dreadful situation. And as a dark background to her thoughts there hung the shadow of Hardy's return. She only realized it in these moods of reaction that followed the exaltation of the last three weeks. And to make matters worse, for the first time in her life she was dissatisfied with herself. Not that she was in the least aware of the deterioration of her character. She took no count of the endless little meannesses and falsehoods which she was driven into by her position. Simple straightforward action was impossible. This much was evident to her, that whatever course she took now, she must end by forfeiting some one's good opinion: Hardy's first—well, she could get over that; but Ted's? Katherine's? Wyndham's—if he came to know every-

thing? It was there, in that last possibility, that she suffered most.

Half-past six. She had given up Wyndham and her belief in psychical prophecy, and was trying to find relief from unpleasant reflections in a book, when Wyndham actually appeared. He came in with the confident smile of the friend sure of a welcome at all hours.

"Forgive my calling at this unholy time. I knew if I came earlier I should find you surrounded by an admiring crowd. I wanted to see you alone."

"Quite right. I am always at home to friends."

They dropped into one of those trivial dialogues which were Audrey's despair in her intercourse with Wyndham.

Suddenly his tone changed. He took up "London Legends."

"As you've already guessed, my egregious vanity brings me here. I don't know whether you've had time to look at the thing—"

"I sat up to finish it last night."

"Indeed. What did you think of it?"

"Don't ask me. I didn't criticize—sympathy comes first."

"Excuse me, it doesn't. Criticism comes first with all of us. Sympathy comes last of all—when we know the whole of life, and understand it."

"What would my poor little opinion be worth?"

"Everything. A really unbiased judgment is the rarest thing in the world, and there's always a charm about naive criticism."

"I couldn't put the book down. Can I say more?"

"Yes, of course you can say more. You can tell me which legend you disliked least; you can criticize my hero's conduct, and find fault with my heroine's manners; you can object to my plot, pick holes in my style. No, thank goodness, you can't do that; but you can take exception to my morality."

She sat silent, waiting for her cue, and trying to collect her thoughts, which were fluttering all abroad in generalities.

He went on, with a touch of bitterness in his voice:

"I thought so. It's the old stumbling-block—my morality. If it hadn't been for that, you would have told me, wouldn't you?—that my fingers breathe and move, that every touch is true to life. But you daren't. You are afraid of reality; facts are so immoral."

It would be impossible to describe the accent of scorn which Wyndham threw into this last word.

"I thought your book very clever—in spite of the facts."

"Facts or no facts, you'd rather have your beliefs, wouldn't you?"

"No, no; I lost them all long ago!" cried Audrey indignantly.

"I don't mean the old, vulgar dogmas, of course, but the dear little ideals that shed such a rosy light on things in general, you know. Ah! that's what you want; and when an artist paints the real thing for you, you say, 'Thank you; yes, it's very clever, I see; but I prefer the pretty magic-lantern views, and the lime-light of life.'"

"Not at all. I've much too great a regard for truth."

"I know. You're always looking for Truth, with a capital T; but, when it comes to the point, you'd rather have two miserable little half-truths than one honest whole truth about anything. That's why you disliked my book."

"I didn't."

"Oh, yes, you did. What you disliked about it was this. It made you see men and women, not as you imagined them, but as God made them. You saw, that is, the naked human soul, stripped of the clumpy draperies that Puritanism wraps round it. You saw below the surface—below the top-dressing of education, below the solid layer of traditional morality—deep down to the primitive passions, the fire of the clay we're all made of. You saw love and hate, forces which are older than all religions and all laws; older than man and woman, and which make men and women what they are. And they seemed to you not commonplaces, which they are—but something worse. You don't know that these *facts* are the stuff of art because they are the stuff of nature; that it takes multitudes of

such facts; not just one or two picked out because of their 'moral beauty'—for you purists believe in the beauty of morality as well as in the immorality of beauty—to make up a faithful picture of life. And you shuddered, didn't you? as you laid down the book you sat up half the night to read, and you said it was ugly, revolting; you couldn't see any perfect characters in it—only character in the making, only wretched men and women acting according to certain disagreeable laws, which are none the less immutable because one-half of the world professes to ignore their existence. You said: "Take away the whole world of nature, take away logic and science and art, but leave me—leave me my ideals!" Isn't that it?"

The torrent of his rhetoric swept her away, she knew not whither. But in his last words she had caught her cue. If she was ever to be an influence in Wyndham's life, encouraging, inspiring his best work, she must not suffer him to speak lightly of "ideals." It seemed to her that her methods with Ted were crude compared with her management of Wyndham.

"Oh, don't, don't! It's dreadful! But you are right. I can't live without ideals. All the great artists had them. You have them yourself, or at least you *had* them. I don't know what to think about your book—I can't think, I can only feel; and I read between the lines. Surely you feel with me that there's nothing worth living for except morality? Surely—surely you believe in purity and goodness?"

Her face was flushed, her hands were clasped tightly together in her intensity. So strong was the illusion her manner produced, that for one second Wyndham could have been convinced of her absolute sincerity. Not long—no, not long afterward, her words were to come back to him with irony.

"Morality? I've the greatest respect for it. But, after all, its rules only mark off one little corner from the plain of life. Out there, in the open, are the fine landscapes and the great highroads of thought. And if you are to travel at all, you must go by those ways.

There's dust on them—and there's mud—plenty of mud; but—there are no others."

"I would be very careful where I put my feet, though. I don't like muddy boots."

"I dare say not; who does? But the traveler is not always thinking about his boots."

"Don't let's talk about boots." She made a little movement of her mouth, simulating disgust.

"Your own metaphor; but never mind. *A propos des bottes*, I should like—" he broke off, and added, in a deep, hieratic voice: "To the pure all things are pure, but to the Puritan most things are impure. I wish I could make you see that; but it's a large subject. And besides, I want to talk about you."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. With all your beliefs, there was a time, if I'm not much mistaken, when you were pleased to doubt the existence of your charming self?"

She looked up with a smile of pleasure and of perfect comprehension. He could hardly have said anything more delicately caressing to her self-love. It seemed, then, that every word she had uttered in his hearing had been weighed and treasured up. She could hardly be supposed to know that this power of noticing and preserving such little personal details was one of the functions of the literary organism. If a woman like Miss Fraser had been flattered by it, what must have been its effect on the susceptible Audrey?

"So you remember that, too?" she said softly.

"Yes, it impressed me at the time. Now I know you better, I don't wonder at it. It's the fault of your very lovely and feminine idealism, but you seem to me to have hardly any hold on the fact of existence, to be unable to realize it. If I could only give you the sense of life—make you feel the movement, the passion, the drama of it! My books have a little of that; they've got the right atmosphere, the *smell* of life. But never mind my books. I don't want you to have another literary craze—I beg

your pardon, I mean phase; you seem to have had an artistic one lately."

He rose to go.

"I've always cared for the great things of life," said she.

"Ah, yes—the great things, stamped with other people's approval. I want you to love life itself, so that you may be yourself, and feel yourself being."

Her whole nature responded as the strings of the violin to the bow of the master. "Life" was one of those words which specially stirred her sensibility. As Wyndham had foreseen, it was a word to conjure with; and now, as he had willed, the idea of it possessed her. She repeated mechanically:

"Life—to love life for itself——"

"And first—you must know life in order to love it."

She sighed slightly, as if she had taken in a little more breath to say good-by. The ideal was flown. She

had received the stamp of Wyndham's spirit, as if it had been iron upon wax. It was her way of being herself and feeling herself being.

The same evening she wrote a little note to Ted that ran thus:

DEAREST TED: I have been thinking it all over, ever since yesterday, and I am convinced that my only right course is to break off our engagement. It has all been a mistake—mine and yours. Why should we not recognize it, instead of each persisting in making the other miserable? I release you from your promise to me, and will always remain, very affectionately yours,

AUDREY CRAVEN.

She had just sent the note to the post when a servant came in with a telegram. It was from Hardy, announcing his arrival at Queenstown. And she had trusted to her engagement to Ted for protection against Vincent's claim.

If she had only waited!

TO BE CONTINUED.



THE FAMILIAR MELODY

ECHOES of song, ethereal they are;
 Across the stillness of the summer night
 Some spirit of sweet melody takes flight
 And brings to earth the message of a star:
 So faint the fairy notes, the leaf-lisps mar
 The whispered dream of this enamored sprite.
 Softly, once more, O murmur of delight!
 O breathed bliss of music from afar!

In through my window comes the wanderer,
 And memories that have been sleeping long
 In the oblivion of bygone years
 Awake, and I am listening to her
 Whose voice made all my boyhood glad with song;
 Almost I see her through the welling tears.

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

SOCIETY AS A MERRY-GO-ROUND

BY MARY MANNERS



THE FALLEN IDOLS



IF there is one thing more precarious than the good-will of princes, it is popular approval. The simile of the savage and his gods is trite and time-worn, but where shall

we find a better?

"Is it for this," says the outraged barbarian, when the conduct of affairs ceases to give him satisfaction—"is it for this that I feed you with chicken every day and stick feathers in your head?"

And down comes the image!

It may be salutary treatment for gods—the system of gifts and glorification when their votaries are pleased, and abuse, verbal and otherwise, when they are angry—but it is apt to impress mere mortals with a sense of injustice. Yet thus do the people deal with their favorites, and the higher they have stood in the esteem of those who think as others think, the greater will be their descent when the pillars of support are withdrawn.

In our own immediate times, behold how many Dagon's have fallen upon their faces! The market-places of commerce and the temples of fame are strewn with their scattered remains. They were not so very worthy, perhaps, when, in the fulness of their pride, they were set up, and it may be they are not utterly despicable now that they have done the thing-too-much and are cast down. But the world can afford to countenance only the evil which it has not been forced to recognize. When the knowledge of ill deeds becomes public property, the public morals feel in

honor bound to condemn what the private conscience might have continued to suffer with a certain equanimity. Very few of us are mentally courageous, and some of us are too lazy, and some of us too busy, to sift evidence, examine into motives, and take time to settle definitely in our minds whether Brown is really as guilty a scoundrel as Smith, Jones, Robinson, and the daily press make him out.

When Brown was at the height of his power we did not institute inquiries as to by right of what especial series of merits he became a great man. We accepted him as such. We saw the outward and visible signs of it, listened to the laudations of his friends, the commendation of the world at large, and acquiesced. He was a great man! Now we find he is so no longer. The results we applauded have, it seems, been achieved by methods which, when once they are made apparent, we must censure or lose our self-respect before our fellow men. His friends lament, the world at large looks askance, we accept the general verdict in the case of his adversity as we accepted it in his prosperity, and again we acquiesce.

Personally the downfall of Brown does not affect us. He held himself very high in the days when he was Somebody, and on the rare occasions when we came in contact with him his notice of us was, to say the least, perfunctory. But we are sorry to think of him smarting now as we did then (only more, for we feel sure he has not our philosophy) under the sense of being of "no account." There will not be lacking those who remember his sins against him—people whom he treated

with brusqueness when brusqueness from him bit deep; people who will bite back with gusto now that the opportunity is theirs—and we wish to register ourselves at least as desirous of extending to Brown, in his ruin, a temperate leniency. The hero is not so gold as he is gilded; but neither is the devil so black as he is painted. We may not be able or willing to defend the conduct of the man, but at least we can refrain from barking at him with the rest of the pack. It will not be his worst action at which they bark (and would not be, very likely, even if they knew which it was); it will be his first mistake, and, thank goodness, mistakes often come from the more generous qualities. Perhaps there will be better chances in the future for a flattened Brown than there ever were in the past for an inflated one.

We cannot expect the flattened Brown to see this at the first glance, however. Perhaps he will never see it. His philosophy, as we said before, does not equal ours, and his ideal of a successful man is just that image of himself which he once saw reflected in a thousand admiring eyes. The eyes do not regard him with admiration any more, and for that he feels himself disgraced. As a political, social, or financial idol he is done for, and his world will have none of him! It may have encouraged him to throw over his principles for his party, but it will be loudly abusive when he throws over his party for his principles. It may have invited him a score of times to carry on his little affairs of the heart under its roof, but it will be scandalized if he sacrifices everything to love and runs away with the lady. It may have sat upon boards (making a great show of wise-owlish wisdom) and pretended it was directing the investment of its moneys, but it will turn and rend him with the first critic that cries shame upon the tricks of his trade.

That is its way. Not to set its face betimes against the *thing*, but against the person discovered doing the thing. And, indeed, it is always easier to *make* an example than to *be* one.

Still, life has not done with a man because the world has. Give him time and he may come to realize this, and, if he has the strength to keep on believing in himself after people have ceased to believe in him—to forgive himself for what they condemn, and condemn himself for what they forgive—he has the spirit that will carry him to places higher, perhaps, than any he has lost, though they may not be in those centers where the looks of flattery focus. He need never think to regain his old pedestal by propitiation of his former worshippers; he must carve out new niches for his feet, and if they are once again set above the heads of the crowd he will tread delicately, like Agag, for he has known what it was to be trampled. Truly, the last state of Brown may be an improvement on the first, particularly if he has learned to dig deep for his own self-approval; but there will always be a drop of bitterness at the bottom of his heart, and he will not forget that the friendly voices which were among the loudest to applaud his uplifting have been equally noisy, if not more so, in demanding his overthrow.

We do not blame the world for finding fault where faultfinding is due, but we could wish it were a little more discriminating in its praise, to begin with; a little more cautious with the adulation that turns a man's head, a little less ready with the abuse that breaks his heart. It is a fine old Falstaff of a world! Not a doubt of it. Good to roister and make merry with, but a bit coarse and unreasoning, for all its shrewdness, when we come to provoke its anger. And if it is ruthless with its deposed masculine idols, it is doubly so with its feminine ones.

These come to grief less often, it is true. Partly because there are not so many ways open to them, and partly because they have intuitions—acute perceptions, which, like the cat's whiskers in the dark, warn them when they should move warily among their surroundings. This sly metaphor, suggesting a certain furtive activity in idols, is not, perhaps, the most perfect that

could have been used, but let it pass. In spite of their cleverness, feminine idols *do* go down, justly or unjustly, and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot quite put them back in their places. They cannot force their way back in the face of public opinion. Not for one minute will their individual sense of right and wrong be allowed to stand against the world's. If they misconceive the spirit of the times and make mistakes, the mistakes are lasting. A marked man may turn himself into a man of mark among his fellows, but a marked woman had better let herself be forgotten.

Mind, we do not deny that there are plenty of women, in the highest society all over the globe, no better than Jezebel for vanity, Zantippe for temper, Cleopatra and Poppæa for general lack of morals, but we do affirm that if one of these ladies goes a step farther than worldly policy is prepared to permit she need not hope to have clemency extended to her.

The line must be drawn somewhere. We are all agreed about that. We incline to quarrel with the world only because it draws so loose a one that its favorites think themselves free to do as they please, when all in a hurry it takes fright lest it should be supposed to countenance their indiscretions and with a sudden turn jerks them off their heights forever.

Take the lovely Mrs. Z. Did anybody refuse invitations to her house because her desperate flirtation with a certain celebrated person was currently reported and believed? No, indeed. As long as she *had* the house and a husband who took no exception to her conduct, neither would society notice it. The Z's were charming people and knew how to make themselves and their surroundings exceedingly agreeable. No one would be uncharitable enough to breathe a word against them except in the most private of public conversations. Moreover, intimacy with the Z's was a passport to intimacy with the celebrated person, who also knew how to make himself exceedingly agreeable. Mrs. Z might still be walking on the

sunny* side of popular favor with her head in the air, if she had not had a decent qualm or two about continuing to live in a *ménage à trois*.

What happened? Mr. Z divorced her for forcing upon his attention things which (to avoid public scandal, he said) he preferred to ignore. The celebrated person—equally to avoid scandal, no doubt—promptly transferred his attentions to an even more lovely lady—one who (as he took care to assure himself this time) would not develop a conscience at the wrong moment. Mr. Z shortly married again—a “sweet young girl,” with the brains of an infant and the face of a doll (her mother gave daily thanks for the consolation “dear Lucy” brought to his wounded spirit), and the only creature whom the scandal really touched was the unfortunate first Mrs. Z, who, having neither money nor position to back her, sank out of sight like a stone in a pond—not so much for what she had done, as for her stupidity in getting herself labeled as having done anything.

Or, take the case of Miss X. What frivolous little heiress could have been more praised and flattered than she? What young woman ever had more notice taken of her looks, which were passable; her talents, which were average; her cleverness, which was, to tell the truth, nothing more than a combination of sauciness and high spirits? Did people think of objecting when she began her career by coquetting outrageously with a dozen different men? Were not her airs and graces admired, her vagaries tolerated, her slights accepted? Did her prestige suffer in the least because at eight and twenty she was still Miss X; still frivolous, still flirtatious?

Not a bit. Every one declared she was hard to please. That she would not give up her independence easily. They admitted leniently that the devoted homage of many adorers might be more intoxicating to the goddess than the mere every-day companionship of a husband. Still, a few of her warmest friends conceded that “Rosetta ought to settle.” The greatest financier in the

country was supposed to be at her feet. He was somewhat elderly, to be sure, and was believed to have an imbecile wife shut up somewhere. But what of that? Immaturity does not often achieve greatness, and men have been known to divorce their wives. Society did not even shrug its shoulders when his automobile was observed to stand for hours before her door; when he hung over her chair at the opera; when his yacht conveyed her (and an unimportant surrounding) to Palm Beach. On the contrary, it smiled benignly and said how admirable would be her management of his magnificent establishment if she were at the head of it. The whole affair had an appearance of pomp and ostentation, a prodigious flavor of worldly well-to-do-ness which could not fail to meet with popular approval.

But when Miss X rescued herself from the semicompromising position into which her taste for tormenting all trousered things had led her; when she pleasantly but firmly declined the further attentions of her amorous gray-beard (who happened, by the way, to be clean-shaven and a fine, fierce old buccaneer for his years); when she suddenly became demure in her attire and actions, circumspect in her speech and conduct, tenderly thoughtful in the expression of her countenance; when, in a word, she was discovered to be *in love*—in love like the veriest schoolgirl—with an obscure architect who had been making inconspicuous alterations in her country house—then, indeed, did society lift up its voice in amazement and indignation.

There was nothing intrinsically out of place in the flirtation of a modish lady (nearly thirty) with an unimportant architectural young man (of about the same age), well-looking enough—it was understood—and with cultivated tastes, who had been thrown (by fate) intimately into her society. But how absurd, how unnecessary, how unpardonable, to fall in love with him and want to marry him; particularly when rumor reported that, in spite of her fortune, he was not so *very* keen to marry *her*! Here was food for mirth. Ro-

setta too fond! Rosetta languishing! What a sight for mice and men, whose best-laid schemes concerning her had so frequently gone agley.

Had she accepted the ardent elderly millionaire, in spite of her natural repugnance and his imbecile wife, her world would have seen reasons—good, substantial reasons—for approval. *That* step she would have taken with its sanction. It would have been like putting a foot on the first tread of a moving stairway; she might have been carried to the most enviable golden premiership without effort. But that she should be desirous of uniting herself with a socially unknown person, whose Puritanical family, it was whispered, regarded her and her friends as a horrid menace to the community—as, perhaps, they were—because—at this late date—she found she *cared*! This was truly preposterous and unseemly, and could not too soon be frowned down.

So society proceeded to frown it down—after due remonstrance, to which, of course, Miss X paid not the faintest attention. She had played at emotions of all kinds for so long, that to have a genuine one at last was intoxicating to her. She was so awfully pleased at finding herself capable of a real passion that she gave herself up to it with a zeal that threw wisdom to the winds. Everything that a gentlewoman *could* do to show a man her tender regard for him, she did. And for a time he responded. It seemed as if a second spring had come to Miss X, and she bloomed in it like the flower from which her name was taken.

The world had almost made up its mind (sulkily) that this last vagary would have to be recognized and made the best of, when it suddenly learned that the young architect had cried off; confessed to a previous attachment for another lady (who had whistled him back when she saw danger of losing him), and retired, with what grace he might, from the scene. Here was just what society had been clamoring for: the freedom of its Rosetta. Yet from the moment she and her newly acquired sweetness failed to please a per-

son whom they themselves had declared unworthy of her, she tottered on her pedestal.

The most simple, honest impulse of her life appeared as ridiculous as it had always been incomprehensible. They felt, and said, and finally believed, that something was wrong. Nobody could point out exactly what it was, but the people of her world shook their heads and agreed that it was a queer business altogether. A man—even a man of that sort—did not jilt a woman of Miss X's advantages, without *reasons*. And because there is a certain class of people who feel that they are showing a rakish, cosmopolitan cleverness by admitting the worst motives in explanation of all human actions, there were those who took a very grim view of the case.

Miss X went about looking dreadfully drawn and pale. By and by a mighty upheaval in the highest financial circle did away with the greater

part of her fortune, and she gradually slid from her place and was seen no more.

She is sometimes held up to the youthful imagination as an awful example of what an "affair of the heart" may lead to.

So the idols crumble, and the world goes on very pleasantly setting up others in their stead, which shall in due time be found wanting and tumble after their fellows.

The game may not be worth the candle, but as long as there are pedestals to be filled there will not be lacking aspirants for the honor of standing upon them. Sweet is the savor of burnt offerings in the nostrils and the song of adulation in the ears. Warm also is the sun of popular favor—while it shines—and more than human are they who would not enjoy the light thereof. To those who mount the pedestals we wish a worthy triumph, a short fall, and a long time of peace.



SUMMER PASSES

THE tinkling laughter of the water-sprites
Is everywhere;

Here on a gauze wing, there on thistle-down,
It rides the air.

Eyes gleam elusively against the sun
From crystal jets; a vagrant, yellow tress
Glints and dissolves where beryl sluices run,
Like gold-fish threading cress.

Now murmurous as a woman's sweet, grave tone
When she's in love;
Now, sharp and gleeful, out it rings again,
About, above.

Laugh on, O sprites, ere, summer's court o'erthrown,
Ye are made captive by the King of Woe
And cast in icy chains, to make your moan
While shrewd winds beat and blow.

ARTHUR POWELL.

THE CLUBS OF MAC TAVISH

By Churchill Williams




HE very thing!" said Mazie, with conviction.

"Which is?" I asked. Mazie has a way all her own of flirting with unpromised conclusions.

"And Saturday shall be the day," she calmly pursued.

This time I held my peace. It was plain Mazie followed a train of thought not to be interrupted by such a trifle as interrogations. We were sitting on the top step of Mazie's Aunt Margaret's porch. A broad lawn sloped from our feet to the roadway which led to the Berwick Country Club. It was from there Mazie had just come, and her golf-clubs lay beside her. I pulled on my pipe and watched a robin tug at an unwilling earthworm. But presently a waft of the afternoon breeze sifted through the honeysuckle, and something tickled my ear. The tickle persisted. I put up my hand. It was amazing what even the faintest air will sometimes do with Mazie's hair. It occurred to me to remark on this, but just then she turned her head. "You see," she said, "you used to play fairly good golf."

Modesty should have restrained my nod, but I realized that I was on the edge of an explanation. Moreover, Mazie hates to be contradicted.

"And so," she went on, "it should make something of a match."

This statement I considered in silence.

"Don't you think so?" she asked.

"It might," I assented. "But—the other person?"

"Mr. Creighton? He plays very well

indeed. He has beaten every other man at the club. That is the reason."

"For?"

"For doing—what I want."

"Which is?"

"To play him eighteen holes on Saturday afternoon. For this." From the stock at her neck she drew a long gold golf-club pin.

I regarded the pin with appreciation. But I was not entirely satisfied. This sudden wish to pit my comparatively untested skill against the acknowledged prowess of Creighton was scarcely to be accounted for by Mazie's unlimited enthusiasm for golf. Besides, Mazie was—Mazie. "Do you want, then, to see him beaten *badly*?" I inquired. I think my voice was sufficiently confident.

"You can do it?" she asked. Her eyes opened wide; and, because I was so busy trying to decide what color they were, I forgot to reply. Presently she looked away, and said slowly: "So you *think* you can beat him?"

That didn't sound quite the thing. "I don't know," I said flatly. "What do you think?"

"How should I know?" she answered. "Mr. Creighton's a very good player. But you were, too—once upon a time."

"Four years ago," I reminded her.

"And you haven't played since?"

"A little—now and then."

"And—lots of things happen in four years, don't they?"

"Yes," I said. And with that a silence fell between us. Mazie was looking out to where the robin still prospected the lawn. I was looking at Mazie. And somehow, though a great many pictures passed before my mental

vision, I saw her in them all. Perhaps that was because she was my focusing point. Instead of the Mazie of trim white shirt-waist, belted about a homespun skirt, I saw a very thin girl in the white muslin of Commencement; and instead of a crown of brown hair, piled and pinioned by tortoise-shell combs, a long, dangling pigtail, tied with a black ribbon, which, once upon a time, it had delighted me to twitch loose. The pigtail days were just before I went to Mexico, and in the four years since I had been roaming the world and learning to build bridges, while Mazie—Mazie, as I now discovered, had been learning much which invited speculation. I was eight years Mazie's senior, and one realizes at thirty that there is a whole philosophy in the very pig-tails which, a few years before, one possibly sniffed at as insipid.

I had been visiting at Berwick just a week, and I had come there at the invitation of Mazie's Aunt Margaret. She was not my aunt at all; but by virtue of some third or fourth cousinship to Mazie I called her "aunt," and was treated accordingly. It was a house-party, after a fashion—the guests a Miss Drew, Patty Welsh, Tom Black, Boyd Creighton, and myself—and, while the rest played golf and rode across country, I had spent my time so far in systematic loafing, which Mazie finally declared was just about what she had expected of me. After flourishing her activity before me for three days, and alternately coaxing and challenging me to join in, she at last gave notice of her abandonment of my case by deliberately counting me out of a proposed horseback excursion, and thereafter impertinently whistling whenever we passed each other. In the light of these facts her proposal that Creighton and I should play match golf, impressed me, upon reflection, as nothing less than a plot to humiliate what she doubtless regarded as my self-sufficiency.

Presently I hinted at this. "You know," I said, "if Creighton *should* beat me, you would feel very badly."

"I wonder!" she said.

"And if I should beat Creighton?"

She elevated her eyebrows.

I was nettled. "Surprises have happened before," I observed. "And in this case such a result would be—awkward."

That roused her. She wrinkled her nose at me. Now, Mazie's nose, when tilted by a wrinkle, has a fascination positively immoral. I am afraid I was not properly awed. "You see," I elucidated, "you are very fond of golf, and Creighton knows this, and he is very proud of his golf, and he also is very fond of——" I paused. "Of course, they say," I added, "that 'making up' is almost worth the quarrel. Still——"

But I had underestimated Mazie's resources. She nodded gravely. "I had never thought of that," she admitted.

"So, now, if you want to call the match off——" I suggested generously.

But she promptly shook her head. "Too late!" she said. "I've told Mr. Creighton about it already. And he——"

Her wait was an invitation, but I refused to be drawn. And she finished: "And he—he laughed."

"At what?" I demanded.

"I'm sure I can't imagine," Mazie said, as she arose and picked up her clubs. She stood a moment, gazing out across the lawn. Then she added reflectively: "But, of course, when one has never been beaten—as is the case with Mr. Creighton—and the other man has—well, has his spurs to win—under such circumstances, the first man naturally thinks——" The rest was left unspoken, and I heard her cross the porch behind me. I did not turn my head. But I made promises to myself. And one of these was that Creighton should have the chance of seeing that golf-club pin in my tie.

But between resolve and accomplishment there is a step, and what I had chanced to observe of Creighton's play told me that this step, in my case, was to be no casual one. I did play what certain people had spoken of as good

golf, and in the past year I had been on some of the most famous links abroad. But whether or not my hand was "in" now, and whether or not, if it was "in," I could show the way to Creighton, was another question. One thing was sure: in the two days before the match I could well afford some practise.

But also I had a reputation to sustain. And open and abrupt application to a game which I had chosen to treat with tolerant amusement ever since I came to Berwick would invite what I had no desire to endure. So with the first robin's call the next morning I was out of bed and, armed with a bag of clubs which I had bribed a Country Club caddy to secure secretly for me, I sallied across fields to the links. There was no one stirring, and when I teed off just below the club-house, so dim was the light that I almost lost a ball at the very outset. But also, with that first stroke, something sleeping in me awoke, the lazy mood which had fettered me for days past fell away, and I renewed the promise to myself that I would win the coming match from Creighton. Because—well, for reasons of my own. Also, as I now realized, there would be a joy in the play itself quite distinct from the satisfaction of the result. The game had me again in its clutch.

So as the day grew and the sun came up to sparkle in the dew-hung grass and bushes, I worked my way along the course of the little stream which wound about the lower edge of the links, and from there struck across the fringe of woods toward the rising land which makes a back-bone, as it were, for the sloping fields between the club grounds proper and the adjoining country. My golf was not all that I needed, nor even what I had expected, and the outcome of shots I attempted more than once made me glad that no one else was about. But, on the whole, my game improved, and I had done six of the nine holes I had set myself for the morning, when, coming up with my ball on a knoll, I looked across a grassy slope, and, a hundred and fifty yards away, identified a broken ridge of

ground flanking a half-hidden gully, which made me pause.

I had seen the place but twice before, and yet I remembered the note of respect in Creighton's voice when, pointing it out to me, he declared: "The 'Slough of Despond.' There are other courses with more bad spots in them than has this, but for devilish ingenuity in placing, and steady, consistent unrighteousness in itself, I'll back Berwick's 'Slough' against any of them. The sand just beyond that ridge is a thousand feet deep if it's an inch, and each particular grain of it so loose a cloudburst wouldn't pack it. Every one tries to drive over it. Sometimes you succeed. When you don't—well, if you ever do find your ball, give up the stroke therewith, if you have any hope of heaven."

Now, I had been at the game long enough not to have made the mistake which just such advice invariably spurs the unseasoned player to risk. But I was moved only by an altogether unreasonable distrust of anything emanating from Creighton; and, having a good lie, I drove to clear the "Slough." The ball rose clean and strong; then, at the top of its flight, poised itself and shot down. I saw it disappear just behind the ridge, and breathed a prayer that it might have fallen clear. Then I lighted my pipe and moved down the slope. And so across till I stood on the comb of the ridge.

Below me the bank broke off sharply, and in several places overhung the shelving slope, part clay and pebbles, which spent itself in a waste of sand, ten yards across and thrice that in length. Right opposite to where I stood this strip was broadest, and at a point half-way across it was where I looked to find the ball. I had marked it down, as I thought, carefully, and, though it astounded me to find that the spot was in sand, I was confident that I was looking aright. For all that, no ball was to be seen. Flat and clean of bush, grass, or other hiding-place, the sand spread before my eyes under the searching light of the sun, now well above a straggling line of small trees

which came down from the road on my right. Yet not a sign of the presence of the little white sphere did it reveal, though again and again my gaze quartered every square foot of its surface. And, knowing that I had not overdriven this strip, and recalling Creighton's remark about the looseness of the sand, I was tempted to think the ball was still traveling down somewhere, many feet below the level.

At last, irritation at my discomfiture found voice, and I said what was appropriate, if not polite. A meadow-lark whirred up at the exclamation, and at the same instant I could have sworn that somebody laughed. I started—at the meadow-lark, of course—and bit off the stem of my pipe. Then, with a shamed consciousness that this was not the fault of the lark, I picked up the broken pipe and plunged down the bank.

I reached the bottom on all fours amid a shower of sand. But I got to my feet very quickly. For, from almost at my side, a voice remonstrated. "I wish," it said—"I really wish you would give notice when you are going to fall on your head in that way."

It was Mazie. She was seated under the overhanging edge of the bank, her back against it. An open book lay in her lap, and her face wore a look of mild displeasure.

"I beg your pardon," I managed to say when surprise allowed me. "I came down somewhat—quicker than I expected. If I had known——"

"Please don't try to explain," she interrupted. "I saw you. You plainly tried to fall on your head—out of chagrin, I must think. For you were angry—very angry. I overheard——"

"I beg your pardon again," I said. "You see, the ball——"

"The ball? What ball?"

"My ball. I played to clear the—the 'Slough,' I believe you call it. And—I didn't succeed."

"Then where is it?" she asked. "The ball, I mean?"

"The Lord only knows," I confessed. "I don't. Moreover, I've got something to ask you."

"Please don't," she said. "I hate catechisms. I came here to read."

"The usual thing before breakfast?" I queried.

"At least, as usual as golf at that hour," she retorted.

This did not appear to be progress. I tried another tack. "At least, the light at this hour is good," I said critically. "And the place itself is—retired."

"Or, rather, *was*," she amended.

I chose not to notice.

"And, as far as that goes, might still be," Mazie remarked to the sand. "That is, if——"

"Oh!" I said. "I wouldn't think of intruding." And rose.

Mazie closed her book deliberately and shook some loose sand from her skirt. I noted that this left plenty of room for two where she sat, and decided therewith that I had had all the golf I wanted. I imparted this decision to Mazie. It seemed to surprise her. "So you *are* practising—for the match?" she inquired.

"Just seeing what shape my clubs are in," I explained, as I threw myself down beside her.

"Oh!" she said. And then: "And when did your clubs arrive, may I ask?"

"Arrive? Why, last night. They were on the way, you see."

To this she made no reply; but, after a minute, quite as if she were stating a fact entirely impersonal, declared: "You know, of course, that your golf this morning was very—poor?"

All at once I saw a light. "As observed by you from this ridge?"

She nodded, and met my accusing gaze with a composure wholly shameless. "At least, you will confess it is a very good view-point," she said, and appended: "But some of your—attempts made it hardly worth while."

"Thank you," I said stiffly.

"Indeed, under the circumstances," she went on judicially, "I scarcely think Mr. Creighton need be alarmed."

This was past endurance. I jumped to my feet. "I will bid you good morning," I said.

She did not look up, and I found my-

self glaring down upon her head. Now, the top of Mazie's head, by no stretch of fancy, can be said to be provocative of wrath, and in search for what was more inciting my gaze traveled downward. And there it remained, fixed. Of certain common-sense practises, Mazie confesses to a scorn—which is very illogical—and one of these relates to foot-wear. Her shoes are ridiculous, but also they are nothing less than impertinent; and at this very moment two diminutive Oxford ties cocked their toes at me in unmistakable contempt of my indignation. On them and on the slimmest of silken ankles crossed above I tried to vent my speechless rage; and instead found it slipping from me.

Presently Mazie looked up. "Still here?" she remarked. "I thought you said 'good morning'?"

"I did," I answered; "but I changed my mind."

She smiled wickedly. And then: "And so have I. I'm going back to the house for breakfast. Find your ball, and you may come along."

"Let it go," I said. I picked up the bag of clubs.

She shook her head. "No," she said. "That last stroke of yours was really very—tolerable. You must know where the ball dropped."

A sudden suspicion seized me. "Do you know?" I demanded.

Her effort at astonishment was almost convincing. Then, after what seemed a tremendous struggle to recall something, slowly into her eyes came an expression of dismay. "Why, come to think of it, I believe I do," she said. "Help me up."

I took her hand and did so. There, pressed into the sand, was the missing ball. She had been sitting on it. "I told you so," she announced triumphantly. "I picked it out of the sand, you see, just before you came up, and I put it there—for fear I would lose it. Afterward—afterward, *truly*, Mr. Warburton, I clean forgot it."

I know I should have said something harsh. But how could I with Mazie's eyes refusing to let me think? I told

her that her thoughtfulness was appreciated.

Creighton was standing on the porch steps as we came across the lawn. He called to us. I didn't answer, but Mazie did. Then she said to me: "Do you know what he's thinking?"

"I don't care in the least," I replied.

"Don't care what Mr. Creighton thinks?" she repeated. "Why, Mr. Warburton, I believe you're mad again. You really must learn to control your temper, or you'll lose that match."

In the hallway of the house I came upon Aunt Margaret. And, without preamble, I said: "Did it ever occur to you that Mazie might take it into her head to marry?"

She smiled. "When have I thought of anything else?"

"And she—likes Mr. Creighton, doesn't she?"

This time Aunt Margaret did not smile. "I believe she does," she admitted. I felt that she was going to add to the statement, and waited. But the addition was hardly what I expected. "You know," she said slowly, "once upon a time I thought it was going to be you—and I think Mazie did, too."

"What an idea!" I exclaimed. And "What an idea!" I repeated, as I went up-stairs. In my room, considering my reply, however, it impressed me as inept, and by the time I had made ready for breakfast it was firmly fixed in my mind that Aunt Margaret had gifts as a prophet which had never been properly appreciated. And yet—there was Mr. Creighton, and there was Mazie.

Saturday afternoon was clear and dry, with just a hint of a cool breeze, and when I came out on the porch after luncheon, Creighton was smoking on the steps. He gave me a quizzical glance which I thought too good-natured to be entirely good form at the present juncture. "I saw some of your practise yesterday," he said. "Why didn't you give a fellow warning?"

Still suspicion of him lurked within me, and my reply was not very hearty. "At any rate," he went on, "I'll tell you this: I put in two hours of practise

myself before breakfast this morning, and I wish I had another day for it. I'll need every moment of it, I know; for I want to win that pin the worst way. Here's my hand on 'May the best man win.'"

An honest ring in his voice told me I had misjudged him. We shook hands. Then he got up and went into the house. The next moment out came Mazie. "I'm going to lend you my caddie, 'Pete,' just for the match," she announced.

"Thank you," I said, and then, emboldened by what her offer seemed to imply, "Mazie," I said, "do you want me to win?"

"As the donor of the prize, I have no favorite," she affirmed.

She was wearing the pin at her neck. "At least, wish me luck," I begged.

"Such as you deserve," she returned. "And"—answering the disappointment in my face—"what that means you will have to find out for yourself when——" she hesitated.

"When?" I prompted.

"When the match is over," she finished. And that was all I could get her to say.

"At any rate, she hasn't another Pete to lend to Creighton," was my consoling thought as we walked over to the club-house. And of this grain of comfort I made a great deal, until we stood on the platform near the starting-point.

Quite a gallery had assembled, and I was talking with Miss Drew, when I noticed Mazie go over to where Creighton stood. They talked very earnestly together, and by and by she picked out several of his clubs and, one by one, swung them at an imaginary ball. In was plain she was discussing their merits, and it struck me that, for an impartial person, she was taking a remarkable interest in the equipment of my opponent. Of my thoughts I must have let Miss Drew get an inkling; for when I turned to speak to her she had left me and joined the others.

Then Creighton came forward, and we tossed for the honor. He won.

As he addressed the ball, I heard some one just behind me say half-aloud: "Luck to you!" I recognized Mazie's voice, and something very like bitterness rose up within me. Now, I told myself, I would win this match, if for nothing else than to spoil her plan. And I thought I meant it.

With that resolve nerving my arm, on the opening stroke I drove the ball a full twenty yards beyond where Creighton's fell. And, with eyes for nothing but the ground ahead, and thought only for making the most of every play, I went on as I had begun. At the sixth hole I was one up and outplaying Creighton, as any one could see. But there the three women who had kept pace with us stopped, and, with Mazie's presence missing, something which had supplied what my very recent scanty practise had failed to give me departed. I began to fall back steadily. For I had disturbing thoughts. What was the use, anyhow? I asked myself. Creighton evidently was the man to whom Mazie wished the pin to go. Even if I did win—well, I was out of the running with her, whatever I might once have been. Then why play the dog in the manger? So at the eleventh hole Creighton was two up, and the match, to outsiders, doubtless seemed slipping away from me.

It was just then, however, that, looking about me as Creighton followed up his ball, I saw a bank on my left which instantly recalled to me an early morning of two days before. Yes, there was the "Slough of Despond," and against the face of that very bank had sat Mazie. The spot was all of a hundred yards away, and yet so vivid was my recollection, that for just an instant I believed I saw distinctly the flirt of a homespun skirt, the flash of a white shirt-waist, about the corner of the bank. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. But there remained only the clay slope, with grass at its top and a waste of sand at its foot, and I laughed grimly at my foolishness.

Yet I could not rid myself wholly of the fancy or of the memories born of it, and perhaps it was exultation at the

thought that even Creighton could not rob me of that early morning which put address into my play. Be that as it may, at the fifteenth hole we were once more even, and I was taking a certain satisfaction in the performance, when, by some mischance, I hooked my ball into the "Cauldron"—to the uninitiated, one of the worst of all hazards on the Berwick course—and Creighton won the hole.

Moreover, from the sixteenth tee I made a miserable drive, and barely missed falling into the "Parallels," which flank it with their valleys of gravel. It was, therefore, in about as ill-humor as man could well be that I slowly followed my rival, switching at the short turf with my club and scarcely glancing ahead. And it was, if possible, in even worse humor that I stopped where my ball lay, and looked up to find my caddy nowhere in sight. Creighton had disappeared over a little rise far ahead, and I was alone. On my right the "Parallels" lifted their double parapet of sparsely grown grass; and I was about to shout for the missing Pete, when that imperturbable individual came from around the far end of the "Parallels," and, without deigning explanation of his absence, handed me the club I asked for.

As I slid my fingers down its shaft, something in the feel of it struck me as unfamiliar, and I glanced at it sharply. But, beyond all mistake, it was a mid-iron, and my only comment was one I had already made many times during the match—that the man who consents to play with strange clubs deserves defeat.

But sometimes we get more than our deserts, though we rarely recognize them as such, and here was a case in point. I was a tolerably good hand with the mid-iron, and from the long grass made a two-hundred-yard shot onto the fair green. It was a stroke that at any other time, frankly, would have made me pause in self-admiration; but now I had but one thought—to overtake Creighton. With the brassy I strode forward. And then followed what was beyond my highest hopes.

With the impact of the brassy, the ball sang aloft in a flight which fixed me at gaze. My club hung at the end of the stroke. And when the ball dropped, it was to come to rest within a few yards of the hole. At any other time, it would have taken me two strokes to cover the distance on this ground.

The first effect upon me of this astounding feat was an uneasy feeling of having accomplished the impossible; but that quickly passed, and gave way to what was much more comforting. It became my conviction that at last I had struck my gait, and that even at this late hour I might pull a victory out of the fire.

So as I came up with the ball I merely glanced at Pete, who, for the first time, was grinning, and took my position for the next stroke with a tingling sense of confidence. Nor was this confidence misplaced. It seemed as if I could not bungle a shot. The ball took to itself a life which never before had I observed in a thing made of gutta-percha. And not for one stroke, either. Whether it was with driver, brassy, cleek, putter, or what, the result of the strokes that followed was alike satisfying. Creighton was playing like a fiend—the better, it seemed, with every time I scored on him. But he might as well almost have been using a shepherd's crook. He was outplayed; and I could hardly understand the thing myself. At the seventeenth hole we were tied, and on the second succeeding stroke from that green I laid the ball dead on a hundred-and-fifty-yard-iron shot, and holed out on the next stroke.

For two or three minutes afterward the gallery, which had been following us during the last stages of the match, swarmed about me with congratulations, and I had no chance to go over to Creighton, who was slowly coming up. When I did he behaved very decently, though there was a shade of irony in his facetious remark upon the remarkable development exhibited by my later play. Then he added: "By the way, some of those strokes of yours beat anything I ever saw. Was it your clubs? What do you use?"

As I had no idea myself, I handed to him the putter which I still carried. He swung it once or twice, then fell to examining it closely. To himself I heard him mutter: "There never were two such clubs. There couldn't be. And yet——" Then, abruptly, he gave me a long, steady look. There was something in his eyes which I did not comprehend. They were very sober, and his lips twitched just a bit as he asked: "Do you mind telling me, is this your own putter?"

"No," I answered; "it's not. In fact, I don't know who owns it or the rest of the clubs I used. I—borrowed them. But Pete must know. Ho, Pete!" I called. But the caddy did not answer, neither could I see him anywhere.

All the while Creighton stood silent, twisting the putter in his hands, and looking at it and never once at me. Then he handed the club back to me. "You needn't call the boy," he said. "I think I know. And if I were you—if I were you, I'd go and get what—I've lost."

This sounded like an enigma. But he turned quickly with the last word and walked away, and I was left staring at his departing figure.

But only for a minute. Suddenly I remembered what was much more important than Creighton. Mazie! Where was she? Of those who had pressed about me at the end of the match she had not been one. Indeed, as it now struck me, I had not seen her since luck began to come my way. And yet she—should she not have been the first to come forward with her word of congratulation? But just then I remembered something else—what Aunt Margaret had said about her. And I believed I understood. Of course Mazie was not here. Why should she be, with me the winner—or, rather, with Creighton the loser? No doubt, even now she was where Creighton alone knew, waiting to condole with him, and wishing me and my luck back whence I had come.

It would have been dangerous for any one to speak to me about the match after that, and I dodged the crowd and

walked quickly toward the club-house. It was my intention to change my clothes in the dressing-room there, and slip back to Aunt Margaret's unobserved, there to make the invention of a telephone message the reason for an abrupt departure to the city by the first train. But to reach the lockers I had to pass through the trophy-room, and on the threshold of that room I was brought to a halt.

The trophy-room at Berwick is large and lighted by long windows, which open on the porch at the back of the house. On its walls are hung or arranged on shelves the many cups and prizes which the golfers of two generations of members have won. At the far end, occupying a central position, is a frame like a gigantic pipe-rack, fastened against the wall, waist high. And in this rack had hung, for ten years undisturbed, a set of golf-clubs. Once they had belonged to Andrew MacTavish, a bachelor, Mazie's uncle, and one of the founders of Berwick—a golfer whose renown among amateurs had spread from his own land of oaten cakes and plaids throughout the world, wherever golf was played, and whose wonderful deeds with these very clubs were embalmed in history. To these clubs even now, indeed, tradition ascribed a power demoniacal, and that this was not more than tradition no one could bear witness. For, upon MacTavish's death, by his express command, they had been locked fast in the rack made for them, and no mortal arms, it was said, had since swung them at a ball.

Now, however, I beheld one of the clubs out of the rack, and in the hands of a person who stood, back turned to me. And that person was a girl. It was Mazie, and Andrew MacTavish's cleek she was raising at arm's-length to restore to its place. She stood on tiptoe in the attempt. Involuntarily, I made a step forward to help her, and at the sound she started guiltily and looked over her shoulder.

But, to my amazement, when she saw who it was, instead of relief, a sudden fright seemed to fall upon her. "Oh,

go away! Please go away!" she cried. But I was close behind her now, and something in her face made me stand fast. I reached over and took the cleek from her and put it in its place, without speaking. And then I looked down at her again.

Her cheeks were burning. "Quick! Quick!" she whispered. "Give me the other—the putter in your hand." And, with that, I felt the club which I had brought with me slipped from my grasp. "Hurry! Oh, do hurry!" she repeated, as she held it up toward the rack. And then I saw that one place on the rack was still unfilled.

For a moment I gazed stupidly at it; then certain things were revealed to me in a flash. I remembered Pete's disappearance at the "Parallels"; I remembered that the club he had handed me there felt differently from those I had played with earlier; I remembered how unaccountably my game had improved, and the wonderful strokes I had made. And on the tail of these recollections came a question:

Who was it who had entrusted Pete with Andrew MacTavish's clubs, with which I had played? Who? And why?

I lifted the putter into its place in the rack, locked it fast, and handed the key to Mazie.

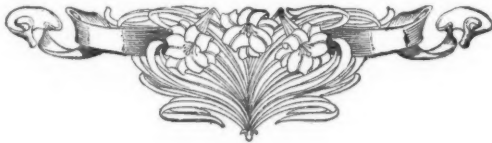
She tucked it away somewhere with a little joyful cry, and turned as if to escape. But to me the moment seemed opportune for explanations. "There was a pin," I said. "I believe I have won it."

"Oh, so there was!" she said. "Well, here it is." She drew it from the stock at her neck.

But I did not take it. "And, besides," I went on, "there was something said by you once about 'such luck as I deserve.' Suppose we talk of that."

She laid a hand upon my sleeve. "Do you know," she said, "there is a very fine view from the porch?" She looked toward one of the long French windows. It was open. The porch seemed to be empty.

Mazie led the way.



THE RIDE

WE left the turmoil of the town behind,—
The weird and wavering electric glare
Blurring the moon,—and in untrammelled air
Some sympathy and solace sought to find.
The friendly boughs wherewith the way was lined
Invited us their cloistral peace to share;
And there were attars redolent and rare
Breathing on every wafture of the wind.

And ever, as we sped, thrush after thrush,
That now seemed near us, and now far above.
With one enamored word assailed the hush
(Ah, the up-winged ecstasy thereof!)
Till echo caught the mellow music-gush,
And all the night throbbed longingly of love.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

WARD AND REWARD

By Joseph
C. Lincoln



O one whose eyesight was unimpaired and whose early education was not neglected, the sign over the door read thus:

HENRY TOLLIVER,
Attorney at Law, Justice of the Peace, Real Estate and Insurance, Claims Adjusted, House Lots Bought and Sold, Dog Licenses Issued, Etc., Etc.

The door hung on one hinge, and the sign on one nail. Incidentally, Mr. Tolliver's trousers were supported by one "gallus," also secured by a nail, and Mr. Tolliver himself had been supported by one client. Now that client was dead, and the town attorney and justice of the peace, the real-estate dealer and claim adjuster, the buyer and seller of house lots and the issuer of dog licenses, had attended the funeral in a body. Mr. Buck Sawyer, proprietor of the Eureka Café, across the street, had also been present at the interment. Now the mourners had foregathered in the back room of the café to discuss ways and means. Outside was the main street of Eureka, tenanted by a lone dog, duly licensed, and paved with a two-inch layer of gray dust.

Mr. Tolliver was garbed in the trappings of sorrow; that is to say, his blue flannel-shirt was draped with a frayed black necktie, and his trousers were turned down over his boots. Mr. Sawyer, in sympathy with his friend, wore his "other" shirt—a red one—and had left his gun behind the bar. There was a bottle on the table between them, and a sheet of paper, weighted down

with a half-filled glass—the attorney's; also a pen and ink.

"Didn't the old maverick leave *nothin'* else, Hank?" inquired Mr. Sawyer, with feeling.

"Nary red," replied Mr. Tolliver dolefully.

"You don't spot another paystreak anywheres in sight, do you?"

"What, here? In this low-down roost? What I ever struck this hole for is too many for me. This ranch don't need a lawyer. What it's sufferin' for is an able-bodied undertaker."

His friend pondered. Then he said slowly: "The boys is gettin' kind of impatient, Hank. The Bull Snake said to me yesterday that 'twa'n't so much your bornerin' the money off him as 'twas your huntin' him up every ha'f hour or so to tell him you was goin' to pay it back. He said he'd be durned if it didn't make him nervous. And Limpy says your grub bill with him is so big it'll sure crowd you out of the dinin'-room afore long. Better git that Down-East letter off right now. It's a chance, anyhow, and if she don't turn up trumps—why, I won't say nothin', and there's the night freight over at Simpson's leavin' twice a week."

The proprietor of the Eureka Café paused to lubricate his vocal machinery, and the justice of the peace gloomily picked up the pen and dipped it in the ink.

"All right," he said; "here goes. 'Tryphosa Mayo, South Wellmouth, Massachusetts.' Tryphosa! Sounds like a soft-drink sign, don't it? Lord A'mighty sakes! Pass that bottle."

II.

It is a far cry from Mr. Sawyer's café at Eureka, Arizona, to Zacheus Crocker's "general store and post-office" at South Wellmouth, Massachusetts. Yet in both the atmosphere is scented with tobacco smoke, and in both the freeholders of the neighborhood gather to discuss men and affairs.

It was mail time at South Wellmouth, and the three chairs and the mackerel-keg in the store were occupied. In the chair Mr. "Tad" Thompson, Mr. Issachar Titcomb, and Captain "Ash" Tyngsboro puffed and proclaimed. On the mackerel-keg Zabina Mayo blinked and ruminated. In the little room behind the frame of letter-boxes Captain Benijah Poundberry, chairman of the Wellmouth board of selectmen, was in consultation with his colleague on the board, Zacheus Crocker, postmaster. And the subjects of this consultation were Zabina Mayo and his future.

"Well, Zach," sighed Captain Benijah, "I cal'late, then, we'll have to call it settled. The poorhouse it'll be, I s'pose. And yet I swan I hate to do it. I knew Tryphosa Mayo ever sence she was a girl, and she had a hard time of it all her life. She thought as much of Zabina as if he had a double measure of sense, instead of bein' short two quarts to the peck. If she'd known her son would be sent to the poorhouse, 'twould have broke her all up. If I was a spiritualist, I dunno's I wouldn't be scart she'd come back and ha'n't us."

Mr. Crocker sniffed impatiently. "Don't talk so foolish, Benije!" he exclaimed. "This is common sense, and in things of this kind I gin'rally try to treat 'em accordin'. Sentiment's all right, but business is business."

Captain Benijah frowned and choked off the retort on his lips with a chew of tobacco. He was not in sympathy with his fellow selectman's favorite motto. "Business is business," strictly lived up to, had brought Mr. Crocker such share of the world's goods as he possessed. It had helped him to foreclose mortgages and attach available property for debt. It and the fear it inspired had secured

signers to his petition for the South Wellmouth postmastership. Also, it bade fair to bring to him the nomination for county sheriff.

"This ain't a case for sentiment," continued Zacheus, with conviction. "Here's Tryphosa dead and gone, and without a livin' relation on earth, so fur as we know, except a son that's more'n ha'f cracked. He ain't got nothin', and he can't work. It takes him a whole day, and a kit and a ha'f of tools, to set a square of gla'ss; and *then* it has to be set over. He's a town charge, and the town poorhouse is the place for him. Huldy Ann, my wife, she come at me this mornin' 'bout the same way as you've done. She thought somebody'd ought to look out for Zeb. 'Well,' says I, 'ain't he *goin'* to be looked after? What more——' Hello! here's the mail. Good day, Benije. See you Thursday, at the meetin'."

The depot wagon rattled up to the door, and the cadaverous leather mailbag was brought in and pushed through the slide. Zacheus received and emptied it; then he proceeded to "sort." Captain Poundberry walked slowly down the store until he reached the mackerel-keg. He touched its occupant on the shoulder and motioned for him to come outside.

"Zeb," he said, as they stood together on the platform, "the s'lectmen have been talkin' matters over, and we've 'bout decided that you'd better move down to Jehiel Crowell's to live. He'll feed you well and all that. I'd take you in myself if I could, but I can't, as I can see. There's others that might, but they won't. Now, Mr. Crowell, he——"

Zabina ventured to interrupt. "Why—why—Cap'n Benije!" he faltered. "That's the poorhouse, ain't it?"

"Well, that's what some folks call it, but you mustn't mind that. 'Tain't like a reg'lar poorhouse—not like a city poorhouse, I mean. Only a few folks there. It's more like a—like a summer hotel. You'll be star boarder—hey, Zeb? Ha! ha!"

Mr. Mayo didn't laugh. His simple face looked troubled. "I don't see why

I'd ought to go to the poorhouse," he drawled. "I can work. Why, I set two square of glass last week." Then he added: "Mr. Crocker told me I'd got to go, a spell ago, but I kind of thought you'd look out for me, Cap'n Benije."

Kind-hearted Captain Poundberry turned red and fidgeted. The best answer he could think of was to swear, under his breath, at the too officious Zacheus.

"Well—well, all right, Zeb," he said hastily. "I'm 'fraid you'll have to go. But don't worry. See you later."

He hurried out to his buggy and drove off. Zabina sat down on the edge of the platform to think it over.

The mail being sorted and distributed, and the occupants of the chairs having departed, Postmaster Crocker cleared the odds and ends from the mail-shelf and sat down to fill his pipe. The matches were kept under the shelf, and he stooped to get some. Then he noticed a folded paper lying on the floor, and an empty envelope beside it. He picked up the paper and unfolded it. It was a letter, and it began thus:

MRS. TRYPHOSA MAYO,
South Wellmouth, Mass.

Now, Zacheus, by virtue of long-established postmasterial rights, religiously read every postal card that passed through his office. Here was a letter addressed to a defunct female whose son he intended sending to the almshouse. It had undoubtedly fallen from an imperfectly sealed envelope—the envelope on the floor, he proved by examination—during the "sorting." Of course he read it. Shall a special gift of Providence be despised?

DEAR MADAM (the letter began): A client of mine, one Lemuel Bassett, declaring himself to be your half-brother, having recently deceased, it becomes my duty to inform you that, by the terms of his will, you or your heirs come into possession of what he has termed his property, namely, a large number of shares in a valuable gold-mining company.

Kindly notify me of your wishes in this matter at your earliest convenience, and oblige
Yours respectfully,

HENRY TOLLIVER, Attorney at Law,
Eureka, Arizona.

Mr. Crocker slowly spelled out this astounding epistle, his breath coming shorter and shorter as he neared its end. Then he read it again. Next he rose and shut the door to the little room and closed the slide of the distributing window, coming back to his chair to read the letter for the third time. His pipe fell to the floor and smashed to flinders. Ordinarily, he would have sworn at this calamity, for pipes cost money; but now he was past swearing at trifles.

"Godfrey mighty!" he exclaimed, with enthusiasm, applying the remark to the letter, not the pipe. For twenty minutes he read and reread the letter. Then he put it in his pocket and went out on the platform for air. And there sat Zabina, blinking sadly at the pines across the road.

"Zeb," said Mr. Crocker, smiling until his face ached from the unaccustomed exercise—"Zeb, how be you?"

Mr. Mayo looked up and then down again. "I ain't feelin' what you might call real splendid," he admitted. "I—I—you see—Cap'n Benije, he— You ain't got a job of work I could do, have you, Mr. Crocker? No squares of glass to set nor nothin'?"

"Well, now, I dunno but I might have, Zeb," was the unexpected answer, as the postmaster lowered his bulky frame to the edge of the platform. "I know how you can set glass, and there ain't no tellin' what might turn up. Er—er—Zeb, how 'bout your ma and you? What's become of all your folks—all them you had once?"

Zabina slowly shook his head. "Ain't never had none," he replied slowly. "Pa was drowned when I was little, and I never had no brothers nor sisters, and ma didn't, neither."

"Didn't she *never* have none?" The question was delivered in the most nonchalant tone, but Zacheus clutched the edge of the platform with a tight fist as he asked it.

"No, not's I know of. Seems to me she had a ha'f cousin or brother or somethin' 'nother what went West when she was—'fore I was born. Seems to me he was killed by Injuns or trains

or somethin'. I dunno much, I guess, anyhow. About them squares of glass, Mr. Crocker; if you could——"

"Don't I tell you I can? Wait till Jim comes back, and then you and me'll go home and have some dinner. I think consider'able of you, Zeb. Always did of your ma, you know. Yes, yes, consider'ble. Valuable—large number of shares—Godfrey mighty!"

Jim, the store boy, came back after a little, and Mr. Crocker crooked his arm lovingly into Zabina's, and conducted the latter to the white house at the corner, a mile away. Mrs. Crocker, pale-faced and meek, met them at the door. She stared at Zabina.

"Huldy," said her husband, stammering a trifle, "I've fetched Zabina here home to dinner. You know Zabina, Huldy, of course. He——"

"You've — you've *what*?" Mrs. Crocker gasped it.

"I've fetched him home to dinner. You see——"

"To dinner? Zabina Mayo? Why—— why, Zacheus!"

"Yes. I've been thinkin' over what you said, Huldy, and I've made up my mind that you was right. Set right down, Zeb, and make yourself to home. Me and Huldy's goin' to look after you—that is, for a spell, anyhow," he added, with an eye to possible contingencies.

Zabina sat down. So did Zacheus. Mrs. Crocker, utterly dumfounded and speechless, brought in the salt fish and potatoes. She had serious thoughts of sending for the doctor. Her husband must be going crazy.

This idea gained in strength during the rest of that day and the following week. During the dinner Zacheus kept urging the bashful Mr. Mayo to eat a little more. He even apologized for the salt fish, stating that they usually had "somethin' more tasty than that."

When the meal was concluded he ordered his wife to make a dried-apple pie for supper, and stated that Zabina was to stay all night. Then he went away, bearing his guest with him. He kept the latter in the store, under his own strict surveillance, all the after-

noon. The wondering Jim noticed that his employer was absent-minded and distraught, even to the length of giving overweight on occasional purchases. Jim's diagnosis was similar to that of Mrs. Crocker.

That evening the postmaster hitched up his horse and made pilgrimage to the neighboring town of Trumet. There was a telegraph-office in Wellmouth, but Mr. Crocker knew too well the gossiping habits of the local operator to trust him. The operator at Trumet, however, he could rely upon, for reasons of his own.

He wrote the following telegram, and handed it over the counter:

HENRY TOLLIVER,
Eureka, Arizona.

What kind of stock left by Lemuel Bassett? How much? Wire answer.

He hesitated over the signature for some minutes. Then he added:

TRYPHOSA MAYO, Care ZACHEUS CROCKER,
South Wellmouth, Mass.

"Al," he said to the operator, "send this along quick as the Lord'll let you. And say: when the answer comes you put it in a plain envelope and have somebody drive over with it to me; d'you hear? And don't say *nothin'* to nobody. Mind!"

"Why, Zach," remonstrated the aggrieved "Al," "you know I wouldn't mention it if you didn't want me to. You know it, don't you?"

"Ya-as," drawled Mr. Crocker, with emphasis; "I callate I do. That is, I know 'twouldn't be healthy for you if you did. The overdue interest on that mortgage of yours amounts to quite consider'ble by this time."

He groaningly separated himself from the cash necessary to prepay the message and departed, leaving the crushed Al to groan likewise, though from a different reason.

These happenings took place on a Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday were days of joy for Zabina Mayo, of wonderment for Hulda Ann Crocker, and worryment for her husband. Incidentally, Mrs. Crocker's wonder was shared by the townfolk. Rumors that

Zabina was staying at the postmaster's house were flying about. They reached the ears of Captain Poundberry, who came over to investigate. Mr. Mayo was not visible, but Zacheus answered for him.

"Yes," said Mr. Crocker; "I am takin' care of Zeb for the present. Ain't no objections to that, is there?"

"Why, no, not's I knows of, Zach," replied the puzzled chairman of selectmen. "Only, I thought——"

"That's all right. You ain't got to think till the meetin', have you? Consarn such a town as this is, anyway! Just 'cause a feller has a little milk of human kindness in his craw, all hands has to turn loose and gabble. Zeb's satisfied; I ain't chargin' the town no board; so you hadn't ought to kick, had you? No, I won't explain nothin'—not now. I've been thinkin', that's all."

Captain Benijah departed, more confused than ever. As he told Zoeth Tiddit later: "It's been my notion that Zach's milk of human kindness had dried up long ago. He ain't been in the habit of givin' more'n ha'f pint a year; not since I've known him. There's somethin' up, but whatever 'tis, poor old Zeb Mayo ain't goin' to suffer. Now you hear *me*!"

On Wednesday, at noon, came the telegram, the non-receipt of which had been the cause of Mr. Crocker's worry. He opened it in the solitude of his office. It read thus:

Property one thousand shares Grand Plaza Cañon. Wire instructions at once.

HENRY TOLLIVER.

By the boy that brought this message—it had been sent "collect"—Zacheus despatched another. This one was addressed to Messrs. Smith & Gray, brokers, in Boston, and was in the form of a question.

Wire immediately market price of Grand Plaza Cañon mining stock.

ZACHEUS CROCKER.

The selectmen of Wellmouth foregathered in the back room of the town house on Thursday afternoon at two o'clock. The full board, with one exception, was present at a quarter to.

The exception was the much-talked-of member, Zacheus Crocker.

"Wonder where Zach is?" queried Zoeth Tiddit. Then he added with sarcasm: "Cal'late his milk of human kindness must have turned sour and made him sick."

"Wouldn't be s'prised," assented Darius Gott. "Crocker shed his milk-teeth consider'ble spell ago. Haw! haw!"

"His eye-teeth's been cut, all right," said Barzilla Wingate. "Zach's up to somethin', and I'd like to know what."

"Meetin' 'll come to order!" commanded Captain Benijah Poundberry, thumping the table. "You needn't read the minutes, Zoeth. Fust important business is what'll be done with Zabina Mayo. I jedge likely you all know that—— Hello, Zach! you're late."

Mr. Crocker entered the room. He strode to his chair and threw himself into it with a satisfied air. His hardened face was minus its usual frown, and his eyes danced under their thick brows. He waved a genial welcome to his fellow members, and then chuckled—actually chuckled aloud.

"Land sakes!" exclaimed Gott, with emotion. "What makes you so set up, Zach? Ain't had a jug come down, have you?"

This was sarcasm, for Mr. Crocker was the strictest of Good Templars. To imbibe entails the expenditure of money.

"Looks like he'd had a milk-punch," observed Mr. Tiddit, with a wink. To the surprise of all, Zacheus did not resent this fling. Instead, he joined in the laugh which followed it.

"Order!" cried Captain Poundberry, thumping the table again. "We was just about to take up the matter of Zabina Mayo. You all know the circumstances, I guess, but I'll jest run 'em over."

He did so, beginning with Mrs. Mayo's death, her penniless condition, and that of her son, and speaking of the latter's mental incapacity and his unfitness for work.

"So," he stated, with considerable feeling, "it seems that there ain't noth-

in' to be done but to send him to the poorhouse. We all hate to do it—Lord knows I do—but what has to be must be. Let's git it over with. If there's no remarks we'll bring it to a vote. Are you ready for the question?"

"Question," said Mr. Wingate, and Mr. Gott echoed him.

Then arose Mr. Zacheus Crocker. Arose, and with chest well out, and red right hand extended, proceeded to make proclamation.

"Benije and feller members," he said. "A little spell ago I, too, was in favor of sendin' that poor, harmless Mayo critter to the poorhouse. I jedged that 'twas hard, but—well, business is business."

At this aphorism the "feller members" grinned. Mr. Crocker, unembarrassed, went serenely on.

"'Business is business,' I says to myself, 'and he's got to go.' But Huldy Ann, my wife—and a good woman, too, if I do say it—she felt diff'rent. Says she to me: 'Zacheus,' says she, 'how'd you feel if 'twas your own son?' she says. 'Now, you've got a little money——'"

Here the speaker coughed, as if he had said too much, and added hurriedly: "*Darn* little, she meant, of course, but some. 'Now,' says she, 'you're a church member, and your rule's always been, 'Do to others as you'd be done, if you had your way.' Why don't you live up to your principles, even if other folks don't? Why don't you,' says she, 'take Zeb Mayo and look out for him yourself?' Well, it looked foolish to me at first, but the more I thought of it the righter it seemed. And then, by gum! I says to myself: '*Tis* right, and I'll try it!' And Zabina's lived with me for two days now."

He paused. The selectmen looked at one another. The situation was beyond words. Zacheus Crocker posing as an exemplifier of the Golden Rule!

"And now, Mr. Chairman and feller members," went on the philanthropist, "I've come to this conclusion: Zabina sha'n't go to the poorhouse. He shall live 'long of Huldy Ann and me. We'll make a good home for him, and he'll

do what work he can round the place. As his near friend I ask you to vote that I be made Zabina Mayo's guardian. If you'll do it, 'twill square my conscience, and I'll feel that I'm a better man. That's all."

He sat down and wiped his forehead. The board was silent. Captain Benijah was the first to speak.

"No!" he thundered; and his clenched fist emphasized the negative.

"Why not, Benije?" mildly asked Zacheus.

"Why, because—because—well, durn it, because I jest won't, that's all! There's somethin' underneath all this. You don't mean to tell me, Zach Crocker, that—why, consarn you! you was the one that was the sottest on his goin' to the poorhouse."

"I know it. And I'm 'shamed of it now. That's one reason why I want to make it up to him. What d'you say, Darius?"

Mr. Gott didn't know what to say. He hemmed and hawed. Mr. Tiddit, Mr. Gage, and Mr. Wingate all began to speak, and all paused, perplexed. Captain Poundberry, however, was voluble.

"I'd ruther he went to the poorhouse a dum sight!" he shouted. "I tell you there's somethin' underneath that ain't come out yit. Zach Crocker, you ever-lastin' skinflint, what you got up your sleeve? Out with it, now, or——"

"Look here, Benije Poundberry! I know what ails you. Your cousin keeps the poorhouse, and——"

The two men were shaking their fists across the table. Zoeth Tiddit held up both hands.

"Hold on!" he cried. "Don't git up a fight in s'lectmen's meetin'. I tell you how to settle it. Send for Zabina and ask him which he'd ruther do—have Zach for guardian or go to the poorhouse. That's common sense. Darius, go find Zeb and fetch him here."

The chairman protested that the idea of a town numskull settling his own destiny was foolishness, but he was overruled. Mr. Gott departed on his errand. In less than three minutes he reappeared.

"He was settin' right out here on the front steps," announced the excited messenger. "And you'd ought to see him. He's——"

Then Zabina Mayo entered the room. But not the old shabby Zabina. This was an edition de luxe. The "town numskull" wore a brand-new suit and new shoes and a new hat. Mr. Tiddit recognized the suit; it was one he had seen in Emulous Sear's store and had coveted, but the price, sixteen dollars, had been too heavy for his light pocket-book.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Barzilla Wingate; and then again, "Gosh!"

"Zeb Mayo," demanded Captain Poundberry, "where'd you git them clothes? Answer me, now! Where——"

Mr. Crocker interrupted him. "I dunno's that's any of your business, Poundberry," he observed tartly. "You put your question now. Put your question."

"Yes, go ahead, Benije," urged Mr. Gage.

"Well" — Captain Benije choked down his indignation—"well, then, Zeb Mayo, which had you ruther do? Had you ruther go to a nice, clean, comfortable poorhouse, where you'll be looked out for, or had you ruther live with and slave for that—for Zach Crocker? Now think afore you answer."

"Yes, Zeb," said the smiling postmaster; "you know how you've been treated sence you come to my house. Had you ruther live with me or be town poor?"

Zabina looked tremblingly at the frowning Captain Poundberry. Then he turned to his new protector's bland, benignant countenance.

"Why—why, I'd ruther go 'long of you, Mr. Crocker," he faltered. "I don't seem to want to go to no poorhouse. And besides," he added, with enthusiasm, "you bought me all these clothes, and you have pie to eat every day. I never had no clothes like these afore—nor not much pie, neither."

Zacheus threw his arm over his ward's shoulder. "That's right, Zeb," he crowed triumphantly. "You know

who's your friend." Then, turning to the selectmen: "There, fellers! I guess that settles it."

And it did. That there was something "underneath" each individual on the board surmised; but there was no proof, and Zabina had expressed his preference. The vote was taken, and only Captain Benijah voted for the poorhouse.

"All right," growled that ancient mariner, as he reluctantly announced the vote. "All right for now. But you listen to me, Zach Crocker! This town'll be watchin' you from now on. You've set the pace; now let's see you live up to it. You'll feed Zeb Mayo good, you'll dress him good, you'll take care of him same as if he was your own son. If you *don't*—well, you'll never be sheriff nor nothin' else again. Why, consarn it!" he cried, almost with a sob, "I tried to do my best for that poor critter for his mother's sake. You look out, Zach Crocker; this town's got its eye on you."

And, beginning with that afternoon, Wellmouth, as personified by its inhabitants, did proceed to "keep an eye on" the postmaster and his protégé. And this is what it saw during the next few days: On Friday Mr. Crocker went over to Ostable and had his appointment as guardian duly confirmed by the probate court. On Saturday Zabina Mayo, accompanied by the new guardian, entered Small's store and purchased another pair of shoes—"Sunday" ones this time. Mr. Crocker also made sundry purchases of wearing-apparel for his own use, among them a long linen "duster," such as, according to Wellmouth ideas, all travelers wore. On Sunday, after meeting, Hulda Crocker made to her intimate friends the astounding announcement that she was going to have a new dress. And on Monday afternoon Jim, the store boy, informed the callers at the South Wellmouth post-office that he was "boss" there now for a fortnight or more, because Mr. Crocker had left town, to be gone at least that length of time. "And he wouldn't say where he was bound, neither," added Jim.

And at that very minute Zacheus Crocker himself, arrayed in the "duster," was making some gratifying calculations on the back of a telegram from Smith & Gray, the Boston brokers. Zacheus had received it just before noon of Thursday, the day of the selectmen's meeting. It read:

Last sale Grand Plaza Cañon, one hundred and thirty dollars a share.

"One thousand shares at a hundred and thirty a share," mused the practiser of the Golden Rule. "One hundred and thirty thousand dollars! *Godfrey mighty!*" He settled back in the car seat, resigned almost to the expense of this, much the longest journey of his life.

III.

There was excitement in Eureka. A crowd of at least eleven people had gathered in Mr. Buck Sawyer's café. Buck himself leaned carelessly over the bar, occasionally casting a glance through the window and across the street toward the law offices bearing the sign of Henry Tolliver, attorney at law, justice of the peace, and so on, as before stated. Inside the law office three more of Eureka's leading citizens were taking an inventory of the furniture and fittings.

"Well, Buck," inquired Mr. Sam Hawkins—"Red Dog, Sam"—"what'll you take for your claim?"

"I reckon," replied Mr. Sawyer calmly, "that just now I'll take about three fingers." And forthwith made his assertion good, in which proceeding he was hilariously joined by his friends and patrons.

"Don't I hear wheels?" asked "Limpy" Boggs suddenly.

"Hear them in your head, I reckon," remarked Mr. Hawkins.

"No, I hear 'em. You listen."

The company listened and became aware of the rattle of a wagon approaching rapidly to the accompaniment of yells and long-drawn whoops.

"It's the Bull Snake comin' back from Simpson's," declared Buck. "He sure didn't take none with him from my place. Where'd he git it?"

The company rose en masse and hurried to the door. Through the clouds of dust came two galloping broncos dragging a dilapidated wagon. On the driver's seat was Mr. Edward Day, locally known as "Bull Snake." In the body of the wagon something long and yellow and gray bounced and gesticulated.

"Whoop-ee!" bellowed the "Bull Snake," pulling up his cattle before the door. "Yow—yip! Here's another one! The only ginuwine creditor from Fifth Avenyoo and the East! Pile out, pard, and join the mourners."

Slowly and painfully the lengthy object slid from the rear of the vehicle and unfolded itself. Then through the veil of gray dust, above the wrinkled and truthfully named "duster," peered forth two small eyes; and the mouth of Mr. Zacheus Crocker opened and delivered these sentiments:

"Godfrey mighty! A-ker-choo! I'm blessed nigh smothered, let alone bein' jounced to death! Look here, mister; can you tell me where I'll find Squire Henry Tolliver?"

Buck Sawyer's patrons shouted. They descended upon Mr. Crocker and hustled him bodily into the café and planted him in a chair beside a table. One hospitable hand poised a bottle and another held a glass.

"Say when, pard!" cried Mr. Boggs, with enthusiasm.

"I don't drink liquor," declared Zacheus disgustedly. "Where can I find Mr. Tolliver? I tell you I'm lookin' for him."

"Humph!" Boggs put the bottle down with contemptuous disdain. "Well, you needn't feel uppish on that account. The rest of us have been lookin' for him for two days."

"Young feller," observed the indignant arrival from the East, "you needn't be so fresh. I've come all the way from South Wellmouth, Massachusetts, to see that Tolliver man——"

"South Wellmouth!" Buck Sawyer shouted. "South Well—— Say, stranger, you ain't goin' to let on that you're Triangle—Tryphosa Mayo?"

"Course not! I ain't a woman! But I'd have you to know that I'm guardian to Zabina Mayo, Tryphosa Mayo's son, and I've come here to git that Grand Plaza Cañon minin' stock, or the money for it, one or t'other."

In about five minutes Mr. Sawyer was able to make himself heard. By that time the assemblage was partially quiet. It is true that Mr. Boggs was rolling on the floor, and Red Dog Sam and several others were hanging limply over the backs of chairs; but these were minor details.

"Stranger," gasped Buck, "you're foolin', ain't you? You sure can't mean that you've come plumb out here to locate Hank and that Grand Plaza pile! You can't mean it!"

"Course I mean it!" Zacheus was turning pale under the dust on his face. "Why wouldn't I come? Don't s'pose I'd trust anybody I could send—for that amount of money, do you?"

Mr. Sawyer took off his wide-brimmed hat and wiped his forehead. "Pard," he said sadly, "you listen to me while I whisper to you. Hank Toller's pulled his freight—he's vamoosed the ranch—skipped the town—see? We reckon he lit out on the freight from Simpson's night afore last, but we ain't sure. All we're ready to bet on is that he owes me about a hundred for wet goods and terbacker, and Limpy here somethin' over that for grub, and Red Dog a hundred and fifty for faro, and——"

"But what's he done with that thousand shares of Grand Cañon stock?" shrieked Zacheus, springing wildly from his chair.

"Stranger," continued Buck, "that's what I'm goin' to tell you. I was with Hank when he writ that letter to Tryphosa, and it was in the nature of a last shot for luck—see? Old Lem Bassett—'Colorado Graybuck,' he answered to mainly round these diggins—he was a little mite locoed, I judge. Seems he always figgered that he owned a thousand shares of Grand Cañon for discovery rights. Maybe he'd ought to have owned it—he did have some sort of a certificate—but there was a tie-up

in the deal. The company wouldn't make good—claimed he didn't discover. So he hung onto that half-way certificate, and spent every red he had fightin' the company in the courts. The Denver lawyer sharps give him up, and he drifted here, and Hank got a rope on him. He was a godsend to Hank while his money held out. Hank made a livin' out of him. Then he and his last chip give out about the same time. Hank was busted. He sits down and writes to Tryphosa, hopin' there was more suckers in the fam'ly. He meant to write for money after he got acquainted, so to speak. Meant to send a bill or somethin'. But all he got was a telegram. Me and the boys got kind of impatient for our coin, and—well, Hank got nervous and pulled his freight. That's all. Some of the boys is over in his office now, figgerin' up what there is worth sellin'. I reckon they're comin' now."

The trio of inventory takers burst hilariously into the café. Their spokesman waved a sheet of paper.

"Boys," he said, "she figgers out about one dollar and eighty cents, outside estimate. That's enough for a fifteen-cent liquid life-saver all round, and one left over. Who gits it?"

Mr. Sawyer turned to the postmaster of South Wellmouth. Zacheus sat in his chair, gazing wide-eyed at the floor. Through his mind, in a rapid procession, flitted thoughts of the money spent for railroad fare, for Zabina's clothes and food, for his wife's dress and his own "fixin's." Also, he thought of his guardianship, and Captain Benijah's threat. He must live up to his boasts and protestations; he must treat Zabina like a son; or he never would be sheriff, nor even postmaster for long, nor——

"Here's another of Hank's creditors," said Buck, indicating the speechless postmaster. "The fifteen cents belongs to him by rights, and he's on the water-wagon, so——"

Mr. Crocker rose. "Gimme the liquor!" he cried, waving his hand wildly. "Gimme it. By gum! I—I need it!"

THE HERMIT INTERVENES



THE eyes of all the little party turned with more than polite attention toward the hostess, Mrs. Gresham, when she announced that she had an adventure to relate. Her notes of invitation a few days before had said that she had a secret to share with them; it was plain that they expected the adventure to be a prelude to the confidence. So they settled themselves in informal, after-dinner comfort, passing the cigarettes and liqueurs in friendly silence, and looked across the glow of the vivid autumn flowers and the shaded candles to her plaintively pretty face. On the hearth of the big living-room the fire crackled rousingly; through the open top of the Dutch door the piazza lanterns, swinging perilously in the late autumn breeze, were visible; and beyond that line of trivial defiance to the night, they all knew by heart what solemn nocturne lay—dark looming hills circling the lake, and dark sky lit by a myriad radiant, indifferent stars.

"It was very horrid, truly," Antoinette Gresham's fluty voice held its note of fright a second while her eyes appealed vaguely to all her guests. "Of course I had no right there—I dare say it was unpardonable; but I did so want to see a real misogamist. He's lived in his cave and refused to speak to any one and cursed all women for thirty years, you know."

"Oh, it's about the Hermit!" There was relief in Lily Frost's voice, relief in the glance she turned toward Lionel

Crewen, languid and picturesque at his hostess' left.

"Yes, my adventure was with him," answered Antoinette, and Lily's heart fell again. After all, an adventure with the Hermit of Seconic Hills did not render impossible an engagement with a promising young sculptor. Antoinette went on:

"I drove over to the falls alone this morning, and left the horse at the road. I followed the trail in—not the one to the falls, but one to the left of that. Suddenly there was a puff of smoke in my eyes. It was a wood-fire smoke—the kind that means a stove and cooking and a badly drawing chimney, not a smoldering camp-fire. It got down my throat, and I began to cough. And then from under an overhanging rock, all covered with tangled things growing above, he appeared. Oh, he's dreadful!—little and bent and hairy, with terribly long arms—not like a human being. And he stared at me for a second, and I began some banality about having lost my way. Then he called me most unpleasant names—Scriptural, I think?" she paused inquiringly.

"Oh, none of these would know, Mrs. Gresham," laughed young Lord.

"I dare say not," concurred Antoinette. "Well, I wanted to run, but the trail was uneven and thick grown, and my knees—well, my knees were traitors. They shook, but that was the only motion of which they seemed capable."

"The rural communities have no business to allow these lunatics loose," declared Doctor Wyatt magisterially.

"They're regarded as harmless eccentrics until they do some irremediable injury. Antoinette, my dear, you were fortunate to escape so easily." He had always had a particular tenderness for Antoinette since her father had left him her guardian, when she was a plump little girl of twelve.

"Oh, but I didn't escape so easily," protested Antoinette, returning the pressure. "It suddenly occurred to my wild man to find a resemblance between me and the lady of his acquaintance whose jilting is said to have driven him crazy. And then I was really frightened! He shrieked out curses—they also sounded Biblical—and said that I could never deceive him, that I thought he had forgotten, but that he had not. And then he rushed into his cave with howls about Jezebels and abominations and scarlet women. I thought scarlet woman had something to do with churches you didn't like?"

"It's a term of reproach alike for ladies or churches of whom you don't happen to approve," said Crewen smiling possessively upon Antoinette.

"Ah," she said, "that's it! Well, anyway, the Hermit regards me in that light. When he disappeared I ran ignominiously, my knees having returned to their allegiance. When I jumped into the cart again, I heard a crashing behind me. It was the Hermit, with a most unpleasant-looking club. How I made Jeremiah run!"

"And was that all?" It was the insatiable Miss Frost who spoke.

"It was enough for me, my dear. What!—to be scared out of my seven senses, as Jane says, and to be mistaken for a bouncing Betty of the countryside—wasn't that enough punishment for my curiosity in wishing to look upon the one man in the world who had gone mad of love?"

As she said the last word her eyes sought Lionel Crewen's with more meaning than usual in their faint coquetry. Lionel's openly ardent glance answered her.

"It is scarcely fair of Antoinette to say that to-night," he observed, "since she has on her premises another such

maniac." He leaned over and possessed himself, unrebuked, of her hand. "You see?" he said.

"You see?" rippled Antoinette, allowing her hand to remain in his.

"Oh, yes, we see!" said Lily Frost and the Lord boy in one breath. But only Mrs. Merton, of all the intimate group, spoke intelligently.

"So you're announcing your engagement, you blessed children!" she cried, with the entire cordiality of the woman of the world. "Well, we are not astonished, though we are delighted."

"My dear, this makes me very glad. Crewen, my best congratulations!" Doctor Wyatt spoke heartily, but there was a swift scrutiny in his look at Antoinette. And then Lily and Walter Lord brought up the lagging rear with their felicitations, and the bungalow buzzed with friendly ejaculations.

"After this," smiled Antoinette, "I'll write to all the world about it. You dear people had to know first, of course. You've all been fairy godparents to the affair, even the Babe there!"

Lily frowned and laughed. "I won't be called a fairy godmother to it," she protested. "Every one knows that I've opposed it. I wanted to lure Mr. Crewen into sculping me!"

"Opposition so often is just the needed torch, Miss Frost, that I'll give you double thanks," said Lionel. And Lily knew that he did not forget her efforts to thwart his tête-à-têtes with Antoinette, or underestimate her hostility to him.

"This morning's adventure," pursued Mrs. Merton, "shows how much you need some one to take care of you. I've never approved of your living down here practically alone."

"But, dear Mrs. Merton, it was seven miles from here that I had my adventure. Here, you know, we never see any one more dangerous than the butcher, and him not so often as we wish. And I have lots of neighbors—you yourself don't live ten minutes' row from me. And Jane is equal to three men for strength and daring."

"Anyway," persisted Mrs. Merton,

"I'm glad you're going to be married. You need a man to take care of you."

"I feel that way about it myself, Mrs. Merton," said Lionel. And then it was that Lily Frost declared her intention of going home.

"A man!" she exclaimed to young Lord, as the canoe shot from the shallow bay of light in front of Antoinette's bungalow into the mysterious darkness of the lake. "A man! Poor Antoinette!"

"May I remark," suggested young Lord, "that the human voice has an uncomfortable trick of carrying across the water, and that poor Antoinette's door is wide open to the piazza? And, furthermore, that no mere masculine intelligence can follow the intricate reasoning which leads you to condole with Mrs. Gresham?"

"Stuff!" said Lily rudely. "Would you like to see me engaged to that Lionel Crewen person?"

"Hardly! But, then, as I ask you at least once a week to marry me myself——"

"I don't mean that. You know what I mean," interrupted the young lady occultly. "Isn't he a man whom you despise in your heart?"

"But I'm a mere barbarian, as you so often tell me. I confess that I'd enjoy shaking that young man by his yellow locks until his teeth rattled. But I dare say it's because I have no yellow locks of my own, and my profile isn't worth a tinker's—second glance. Then, I never sculpted a thing in my life, and they say he's pretty good at it. And I'd feel like a fool sitting on a foot-stool in a circle of light, reading things out of little green books—I shouldn't know what to do with my legs. But then, I wouldn't give a continental to hear the whole sacred Ring, and I couldn't read three pages of Pater to save my life. So my opinion doesn't count. I've no soul, to start with."

"That's true," said Lily tranquilly. "But, oh, poor Antoinette! How can she do it? Of course Jim Gresham was a self-willed, tyrannical brute, but he was a man! And she adored him. They came to fight, of course, unbearably;

but I have always been convinced that they really loved each other and would some day be reconciled. And now this picture man—— It's horrid. I wonder where Jim Gresham is now."

"Don't know. I suppose he's still experimenting with his bubbles in France. Waldo says he's made one that's a wonder at hill-climbing. She never hears of him, I suppose?"

A skilful touch of the paddle sent the canoe swinging beside the Frost pier.

"Ugh!" shivered Lily, stepping out. "It's freezing and lonely, and this engagement is a horrid end to the summer. I'm glad we're going to town so soon. No, of course, she never hears of him. She forbade even me to mention his name, long ago."

Back in Mrs. Gresham's the remnant of her dinner guests sat—Mrs. Merton, at whose place Lionel Crewen had been staying; that picturesque young man himself, and Antoinette. The doctor had gone tramping off alone to his hotel in the village, a mile away.

The shadow of melancholy on Antoinette's appealing face gave to what would have otherwise been merely a pretty woman the lure of a hidden interest. Mrs. Merton's gaze, following her kindly and keenly all the evening, sought to surprise the secret weakness of character which found a fascination in Lionel Crewen. Of course he was amusing for one's dinner-table, attractive for one's country house, an agreeable appendage at tea; but for a husband! Well, he was something of a professional fascinator. Perhaps Antoinette was flattered by her victory over the young girls and the emotional spinsters with whom his chief successes had been. Probably she had succumbed to her first experience in artistic love-making. Certainly Jim Gresham's way would have been very different, and Antoinette had steered almost cloisterally clear of the educative influences of flirtation since their divorce, five years before.

"Children," Mrs. Merton announced, suppressing a yawn in the midst of her pondering, "I'm going home. No, Li-

nel, you can't come. You don't row, and I dare say you don't swim. Jenkins would only be obliged to save you in an accident, while I perished miserably in my devotion to the higher hospitality. No, I'll send him back for you in half an hour. Good night, Antoinette. You can never again give so charming a dinner, my dear, for you'll never have such delightful news to flavor it. Brrrh!" She stepped out upon the piazza. "How black and deserted it is, with all the cottages boarded, nearly! How trivial our little lanterns and lights begin to look now that the fall and the loneliness are here again!"

In a few seconds the outer darkness of the lake had engulfed her, and Crewen, who had attended her to the landing, sprang back. Antoinette stood in the open doorway, the lights from lamps and candles, from fireplace and lanterns, illuminating her rosily.

"My lady of lights!" he murmured, pausing to look at her.

"Your lady of lights must get a wrap," she said, shivering.

"Let me get it."

"No, thank you. It's up-stairs."

She smiled across the rail of the stairway, which ascended from the living-room, and he stood watching the glimmering grace of her light-gowned figure against the background of rough wood and plaster. His attitude was appreciative as well as adoring, and her vanity felt a faint thrill of gratification in it.

In the darkness of her room she fumbled for a wrap, not striking a match lest she should disturb Aunt Lena's heavy slumbers, or Jane's. On her way back she paused for a minute at the window to look down, across the tiny area of light and color at her own doorway, to the dense mystery of the night beyond. She loved the place. Its peace and largeness were a balm to her still sore spirit. She lingered, drinking in the solemnity of the farther view. The thought of Lionel, posed at the foot of the stairs, did not hurry her.

"He loves me very—gracefully," she thought, the inevitable contrast in her

mind. "How masterful Jim was! I liked it then—girls are silly creatures. It seemed stalwart, manly. It was—ah!" Her brows contracted over later memories. "Ah, well! It is wiser, perhaps, to be deeply loved than to love deeply, if one may not have both. Of course I'm very fond of Lionel. And I cannot bear this repressed, starved life any longer."

As she turned from the window her eyes caught a glimpse of something moving at the edge of the shadow. To her unstrung apprehension, it seemed a small, hideous, bent figure. Her heart beat thick with fear.

"It couldn't be," she whispered, through lips grown suddenly dry. "It couldn't be."

Her peering disclosed nothing more, and she shudderingly put away the thought of the wild man who had driven her from his cave with a gibberish of Scriptural curses and uncouth threats. She hurried down, to find Lionel stretched before the fire, his head propped upon a blue cushion, the light playing upon his fair hair.

"Sweetheart," he cried, in beautifully modulated reproach, "how long you have stayed away from me! And I—see how good I am to you, unkindest one! See what I have found to read to you." He held a little green book up, but her hand was outstretched for silence.

"Hush!" she whispered. "Don't you hear something?"

He leaned upon his elbow and listened. Then he rose and moved toward the door. The great tide of the wind surged through the trees, the water gently lapped the beach, and a belated whippoorwill sent its melancholy call into the night. Then he shook his head and turned toward her.

"I hear nothing," he said intensely, "but the beating of my heart for you. Dear love, sweet love, do you know how many hours it is since we were alone, how many hours it will be before we are alone again? Come!"

He held out his arms, and Antoinette moved slowly toward the proffered embrace. She was still listening, but only

the night sounds of wood and lake broke the stillness as she received her lover's caress.

II.

"Thank God!" said Ward, with pious intensity, "there's another sign-board!"

In the gray light of the early evening the skeletonlike thing stood at the cross-roads, stretching its arms east and west. Gresham laughed.

"Better not waste your gratitude," he cautioned, "until you see if it's legible. Remember the ones we've passed."

"Still, a finger-post must point to something, somewhere, and at present we're nowhere!"

Almost he seemed to speak the truth. The broad valley in which they were showed alternation of wood and meadow; an hour before the last rays of the sun had flashed upon a stream somewhere in the waste, but, now that the fires of day had burned down to ashes in the west, that mark was gone. Only forest and bare space stretched to the base of the hills.

"We're in the State of New Hampshire, that's sure," Gresham proceeded to reason.

"Sure? I'd like to know how you make that out. It's more likely to be Canada or Maine; or it may be Vermont or Massachusetts. God knows we've traveled enough to be in any of them—in all of them!"

He leaped from the automobile and made for the triangular patch of grass on which the sign-board stood. He peered at it from various points.

"Here's the lantern," called Gresham, tossing him the leather-covered cylinder. Ward pressed it, and the white light illumined the post, rotting away to silvery ruin. The head of the arrow was discernible, and something that might be construed into "14 M." Ward swore in the darkness.

"Well?" snapped Gresham.

"It is fourteen—or maybe a hundred and fourteen—miles to something in the west. That's all." He extinguished the lantern and climbed back into the car. Ward was hungry and irritable.

"We'll go there," declared Gresham. "Here, take a cigar, Ward, and look pleasant."

"Why you couldn't have taken the plain road for Portsmouth," grumbled Ward, "instead of twisting among the hills all day, I don't see. We could have done the North Shore and been in Boston by this time. And as for the test, your blooming machine made that when she climbed up to the summit. We might just as well have gone back by a Christian road as——"

"See here, Ward," interrupted Jim Gresham, whose temper was notoriously short, "I'm sorry to have kept you from any engagement you may have in Boston or elsewhere, and I'm a damned sight sorrier to have you sitting here growling like this. You just remember that you offered me the boon of your society, and that I didn't urge the trip upon you."

"All right, Jim. Keep your coat on, old man." A few whiffs of his cigar had soothed Ward. "I've no engagement in Boston or elsewhere; I was only thinking of dinner. It's eight," he added, after a look at his watch, "and we lunched at twelve, you remember. But we must strike at least a farmhouse fourteen miles along, and they'll knock us up some ham and eggs. By Jove! the road forks here."

"Which turn shall I take, Ward?" Jim spoke with unwonted humility, ashamed of his recent outburst of temper, and ashamed of the vagary which had first led them off the main traveled road.

"Let's stick to the left, since it's all a matter of luck."

Gresham drove the machine into the left fork. The headlight cast its effulgence low along the road. The wayside grasses took a ghostly luster from it. The throb of the engine sounded in the hush of the countryside. Jim glanced toward his companion. The friendly red tip of a cigar shone, and the darkness made Ward's face almost a blur above it.

"See here, Ward," he began gruffly; "you wanted to know why I didn't take the straight road from the Summit

House to Portsmouth. Well, I'd heard that—that——"

"Oh, it's all right, Jim," Ward hurried in to avert confidences.

"That Tony was camping somewhere in the lower hills," Jim finished determinedly.

Ward tried to make his voice easy and natural.

"I see. Of course, of course!"

"And, Monty, I'm a sentimental ass! I wanted to go over the roads she'd been over, and maybe to catch a glimpse of the place where she lived. Oh, I'm a sniveling, driveling fool! That woman hates me! She wouldn't speak to me if she saw me face to face. She won't touch a cent of my money, and she has only a picayune income herself. She's an obstinate little devil!"

There was a pause. Ward was silent with embarrassment. He had been Jim Gresham's best man, and the friend of the family in the days that followed. And he had loyally held Jim blameless in the final flare-up. But never before had he heard Jim talk.

"Er—er," he finally said—"well, Jim, you had something of a will of your own, too."

"I know. Oh, well, it's no matter! I only wanted you to know that it's because I'm a sentimental calf, mooning after a woman that hates me, that we're here."

"That's all right, old man," mumbled Ward. "Don't you mind me. And Tony—Tony always was a hummer!"

In his heart he did not think so, but he was a sympathetic friend.

The unknown road stretched ahead, briefly lighted from the machine. The dense darkness of the night had gathered. Innumerable stars irradiated the heavens. Ward regretted that he was too hungry to appreciate the crisp, fragrant quiet of the road and the sentimental sufferings of his friend. Suddenly there was an explosive sound from the boiler. Gresham jerked the levers, the car veered, ran resolutely off to the side of the road, and stopped within a foot of a stone wall.

Half an hour later Gresham came out from under the machine. He reeked of

gasoline as he stood wiping his hands on some waste from the box.

"She won't budge again to-night, Ward," he said grimly.

Ward repressed his natural inclination toward profanity out of regard for his friend's feelings.

"We must have gone nearly fourteen miles," he said optimistically and patiently. "We must be near the 'some place' now, and the eggs——"

"Unless we took the wrong turn."

"We couldn't have done that. All roads lead somewhere, anyway."

They set off through the darkness. At first their strides ate up distance. Then Ward began to fall behind and to limp. The other man, absorbed in his own thoughts, mechanically accommodated his pace to his friend's, not noticing its vagaries. By and by Ward gave a shout.

"Hurrah! A road-house!" he cried. He pointed to a gleam of lanterns visible through the tracery of trees at the side of the road, and sat down as one whose duty to the community was done.

"Road-house!" snorted Gresham. "Do you think you're on the road to Hempstead? Where—— By Jove! There are lights!" He pushed through the growth of young bushes for a clearer view.

"You're right," he said, returning. "There are lights, but they happen to be on the other side of some water. Hear that lapping? That's it, and it's between us and your road-house."

Ward groaned.

"We'll have to walk around it," continued Gresham. "It seems narrow—it's the head of a cove, I think. I can see the bulk of trees along the end of it."

"Gresham," said his friend, "I'm done for. I've got a game foot, and this pause has been fatal. Yes, it's the same old football foot. Go on, rouse up the road-house or the castle—I don't care what it is—and tell them we've got to have food and shelter, and that I've got to have a conveyance. A wheelbarrow will do. Don't take any excuse. Go on. I can't walk any more, and if the place is as near as you say, it won't be

long before you're back with a rig. Bring a sandwich, too, will you?"

Then the darkness swallowed the swift figure of Gresham, and Ward smoked by the roadside and thought of the eccentricities of love.

III.

O sweetest face, mysterious,
And wan with all desire—

Lionel was reading from the little green book. Antoinette leaned back luxuriously in a chair covered with a bear-rug, and he was on a foot-stool by her side. The rosy light from the fire and the wide-shaded lamp encompassed them both. But the consciousness of the picture they made, the thrilling cadences of his voice, did not soothe her into forgetfulness of her fears. Indeed, she rather resented the artistically carried out assumption that there was no need of fear. She interrupted him now.

"Ssh! There it is again."

"It is nothing, sweet. Or, at the worst, it is Jenkins signifying his presence discreetly." But her eyes still held the anxious look of listening fright.

"My poor little quivering child!" he said tenderly, rising and putting his arm about her. "It is her nerves. She must forget all her horrors, and think only of—"

"Ah, ah!" shrieked Antoinette. There was a crash in the pantry, and, swift upon the sound of broken crockery, the curtains at the passage were wrenched back, and the half-animal figure of the Hermit leaped into the room—hairy, bent, long-armed, like an ape. For an instant he blinked in the sudden glow of the lights; then, with a cry upon his foaming lips, he sprang toward Antoinette.

"Lionel!" she shrieked. She was scarcely conscious of the withdrawal of his arms, but as she stumbled backward toward the door she became aware that he was ahead of her.

"Yes, yes, dear," she heard; "Jenkins—Jenkins must be here! Jenkins, Jenkins!"

In all her life Antoinette had never thought it possible for a man whom she

knew to be a coward. She had taken the instinctive feminine view that timidity is forgivable—even attractive—in a woman, and quite impossible to such men as she could know. Now, as she suddenly beheld her lover fumbling with the fastening of the half door, heard his panting breath and his vague mutterings, a horror greater than her fear of the man behind her—an unbelievable horror—seized her.

"Lionel!" she shrieked—command, fright, outrage, in her voice. And then, as the damp hands of the mouthing creature behind her caught her bare arm, some sudden impulse—an impulse in which rage and scorn of Lionel were blended with the deepest yearning of her heart—bade her cry again: "Jim! Jim!" Then, with hot eyeballs glaring into hers, and an unbearable pain in her crushed wrists allying itself with sheer terror to weaken her, she toppled over backward. Her last impression as she lost consciousness was of Jane on the stairway and of some collision at the door.

When she opened her eyes, in response to a deluge of vinegar from a handy cruet, she felt no great surprise to see Jim Gresham's heavy face bent above her. It was in Jane's big-boned hand that the cruet was held—Jane very stalwart and uncompromisingly dignified in her red plaid flannel night wrapper.

"Don't be afraid," said Jim. "The lunatic's tied up." His voice shook.

"I'm not afraid," she answered. She felt as safe as she had ever felt in her childhood when she was wrapped in her mother's arms. Safe and irresponsible. Then her eyes wandered, and by the fire she caught sight of a tall, fair man, whose fingers still closed over the pages of a little green book. Unmeasured scorn of him filled her heart, and with it shame that she had ever imagined it possible to care for him.

"Oh!" she said cuttingly. "Mr. Crewen—Mr. Gresham. Mr. Crewen is—is—a guest at Mrs. Merton's across the lake, Jim. Mr. Gresham is——"

"Say it, Tony," pleaded Jim. "Say it—and mean it. Your husband, Tony!"

Antoinette blushed and her eyes wavered. But her heart owned the old, delicious thrill of subordination.

"Mr. Gresham is my husband, Lionel," she said obediently.

What Lionel answered is of no particular importance. It was not without its cleverness, however; he was not caught unprepared in verbal emergencies. The end of it was:

"I think I hear the dilatory Jenkins, Mrs. Gresham. I'll get him to come in and remove that creature to the Mertons' stable until daylight."

So he made his exit with some of the dignity of usefulness about him, and an hour later Jim Gresham awoke to the

recollection of his friend, Ward, sitting on the roadside half a mile or more away.

"No," said Mr. Crewen, in explaining his choice of a figure for his "Peace" to one of his studio-tea visitors last winter; "no, I did not choose a woman for the model. Woman is a distinctly retrograde influence in civilization; her standards are entirely barbarian. In her mind no spiritual quality ranks with brute courage. Of course there are some rare souls, dear lady, with whom it is otherwise; but I speak now of the typical woman—a savage at heart, an untouched savage."



GIFT O' GOD

THY Birthday, darling, risen white and new!
 Last April when the roses nodded bright,
 God sent a little soul from out the blue,
 Adrift into the night.

Adown the shining ranks of stars he pressed,
 To arms of love all opened wide he came,
 We called him by the name we loved the best,
 A little earthly name.

We knew naught else: our feet have journeyed long
 From that bright world he dwelt in yesterday.
 Perchance the angels called him in their song
 A name we cannot say.

One year ago, with tiny arms love-filled,
 Tow'rd our far earth thy little face was set,
 And now the angels' music is unstilled,
 Thy dreaming holds it yet.

Upon thy brow there shineth still God's touch,
 Thine eyes are sweet with light beyond our lore,
 We only know His Kingdom is of such,
 We kneel and ask no more.

This is thy Birthday, for the roses lift
 Once more their incense in the sweet sunshine.
 Oh, Father—Father! Have we any gift
 That's meet to rank with thine?

MARGARET HOUSTON.

THE INEVITABLE THING

By Frances Wilson



MISS WILDER, swaying gently back and forth in the hammock, allowed her gaze to rest idly upon the tennis-court, where four men, in the baggy, soft-shod ease of tennis attire, sent the balls tirelessly back and forth, pausing occasionally to mop their brows in joint tribute to the exercise and to the ardor of the June sun.

There was a lazy satisfaction in watching them, especially Halwyn, whose keen, dark face never flushed from the exertion, and who, she told herself with a little explosion of mirth, could sweat like a gentleman. The possessor of this unique accomplishment had, moreover, at least two other claims to her attention: he played a fine game, and he possessed to a marked degree the quality of remoteness. He always made her think of the Himalayas, the others suggesting nothing further removed than the White Mountains.

The scene was well worth looking at, for the moving figures in the foreground had a goodly share of masculine grace, while behind them a sleepy tidal river basked in the sunlight, dotted here and there along its shores by little boats, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have worn a pleasantly inviting appearance. But that was just the rub. The circumstances were not ordinary.

In the usual course of events she, Natica Wilder, would not have been spending the summer quietly with her mother's cousin in the old Dutch manor house mellowed by the memory of many bygone Van Schaacks; nor would she

have found there, where she expected a summer filled with memories and dreams, four men that her practised eye instantly perceived to belong to the genus *interesting*. And certainly it was anything but usual for four individuals of their sex and social qualifications to behave to her as they had done.

When, upon her arrival, a month earlier, her cousin had rather nervously announced the presence of the quartet, Miss Wilder had received it with an agreeable stir of anticipation, despite the fact that she had planned a summer shorn of the necessary material for flirtations.

"I'm always so interested in new people," she explained frankly to Mrs. Merwin. "There's a delicious excitement about strangers. You never know but what the most interesting person in the world may turn up at any moment, with no more warning than a commonplace 'Allow me to present Mr. Jones.' Do these young men board with you, Cousin Lisbeth?"

Mrs. Merwin, born Van Schaack, quailed perceptibly at this brutal directness. It might be very well to call a spade a spade, but she drew the line at calling a boarder a boarder; and her manner as she replied was a marvel of gentle dignity.

"No Van Schaack has ever taken boarders, my dear," she said firmly. "Three years ago I was persuaded, greatly against my will, to receive these gentlemen into my family as guests—paying guests," she added, rather consciously.

"They now seem like sons or younger brothers," she went on more smoothly, "and I should really miss them if

they did not come. They seem to love the old place as much as I do, and when they're not playing tennis they're quarreling as to whose turn it is to have the Anneke Jans bedspread."

As Miss Wilder recalled this scrap of conversation, and compared her anticipation with the reality, she indulged in a little frown of puzzlement and chagrin, for the paying guests had, in truth, behaved in an extraordinary manner. Instead of showing that taste for her society which she expected as a natural right from all men, they had remained stubbornly aloof. Though they showed her always a punctilious courtesy, it was of the sort that said as plainly as words: "Thus far and no farther."

"They act as if they had drawn a circle around their sacred forms," she mused jeeringly. "I am taboo. There's no doubt about that. But why? I've always supposed I was rather nice."

The answer to this question came a few days later, in a most unexpected manner. A bit of conversation which she overheard resulted in her complete enlightenment.

So that was it! They didn't want a girl about. They wanted their summer all to themselves, the wretches, and actually thought her a spoil-sport and looked upon themselves as martyrs. As one of them had brazenly put it, they wanted "God's sweet country, a rattling game of tennis, and nothing more."

"Eternal vigilance is the price of masculine liberty," said a voice that she recognized as Halwyn's. He was evidently addressing Dick Suffern, otherwise dubbed "the Cub." "Don't you go to listening to the song of the siren, young man," he went on in a bullying tone. "The lady'll get you if you don't look out. Nice little boys like you aren't safe."

"Well, I just want you fellows to know that I feel low-down," she heard the Cub retort; and then she passed deliberately from the blameless attitude of accidental listening to the deplorable one of deliberate eavesdropping without a qualm.

"We all feel low-down," she heard

next in the suave tones of Stanway, who in point of years was, next to Halwyn, the eldest of the group. "That's just what we have against her. She makes one feel like that unpleasant quadruped that wears bristles. And what right has she to do that, I'd like to know?" he ended virtuously.

"An inalienable, prehistoric right," murmured the eavesdropper, with a suppressed laugh, and then fell to listening again, not wishing to lose a word of so illuminating a conversation.

"Yes, young 'un, what right has she to do it—to come here to Mrs. Merwin's——"

"Ours — right — discovery," interpolated Kingsley the taciturn, who articulated in much the same way that an unskilled motorman runs a car.

"Yes, as King says, ours by right of discovery, taken in the sacred names of celibacy and tennis—what right, I say, has she to come here?"

She heard an amused chuckle, and something that sounded like a disgusted "Shut up" from the Cub; then Halwyn's calm, judicial voice:

"We cannot enjoy a little innocent game of tennis now," he drawled, in an injured voice, "without being conscious that there's a lady with reproachful eyes sitting in the hammock. Gentlemen, we must be firm. United we stand; divided, there's no telling what might happen. Why, she might even ask us to teach her tennis next. And I don't see myself playing girl tennis—not if I know it."

"Indeed!" ejaculated the eavesdropper, with soft indignation. "Well, if you don't need a lesson!" she went on hotly; "and I think I'll endeavor to administer it." Presently the most dimply dimple in the world, which was stationed freakishly at the left-hand corner of her mouth, danced into view, then vanished. "I'll take them in order, according to their age," she murmured demurely.

It must be said in justification of the Cub that he did not realize precisely what was happening in the days that followed, for the song of the siren takes

various forms, though it is always unchangeably sweet.

Miss Wilder's manner, erstwhile as politely indifferent as the manner of the paying guests was guarded, now underwent a change so far as young Suffern was concerned, and he began to regard himself with the quickened interest that comes of finding that another has discovered in us golden qualities only vaguely suspected, if suspected at all. There was a new maturity in his manner, a new aplomb in his speech. He was the man who had found himself, who had discovered in life new meanings and a new poetry in a country June.

Something of this fine new confidence, this sense of being a man of destiny, he one evening confided to Miss Wilder in the velvety gloom of the porch, and once more the freakish dimple danced about the corner of that young woman's charming mouth.

"Don't you ever find it dull, you four men all by yourselves?" she asked.

"Beastly!" was the fervent reply.

"I sometimes wish I played tennis! But, of course, you wouldn't want to play with a beginner, and I couldn't think of asking you to." (Voice full of patient resignation.)

With a splendid rashness, the Cub, who was aware of a growing defiance toward his friends, insisted that it would be the delight of his life to teach her; that he hadn't suggested it before because—because—well, to tell the truth, because living alone with a lot of other fellows made one a bit selfish.

And so Halwyn and Stanway, arriving clannishly the next afternoon, were confronted by the unwelcome spectacle of the youngest member of their brotherhood painstakingly initiating Miss Wilder into the intricacies of tennis.

"And, by Jove, she has my racket!" gasped the outraged Halwyn, in whose estimation a racket was as invincibly personal as a tooth-brush. "To think that after we've nursed that young serpent in our——"

"New York apartment," supplied Stanway feelingly.

"And brought him out to pick the daisies——"

"And drink milk," chimed in his sympathetic companion.

"He would do us up like this!"

The Cub, looking toward them as Miss Wilder stooped to pick up a ball, found two pairs of clinched fists wrathfully threatening him. The lady, however, glancing in the same direction a moment later, saw nothing but two grave and dignified gentlemen, who lifted their hats with profound deference as they entered the house.

"Well, she's broken in!" observed Halwyn grimly, as they mounted the stairs, but at his friend's reply he forgot that grievance in a new and fearful suspicion.

"Rather fetching eyes, Hal—did you ever happen to notice? They remind me of a Scotch mist," was what he said.

"The deuce they do!" was Halwyn's ungracious rejoinder.

When the Cub tried to slink into his room to dress for dinner, he found his vague intention of avoiding his friends foiled. Each of the other doors stood slightly ajar, and before he could reach his room and bar them out they were upon him.

"You've done it, you have!" snorted Halwyn. "Do you realize what we're in for now? Nice little girlish games with Miss Gray Eyes, while one of us ornaments the surrounding turf. You're a nice one, you are!"

"Why," burst out Kingsley, with unprecedented volubility, "do you realize what you've done, boy?" He paused for a full moment and then went on solemnly: "You've exposed every one of us to matrimony! Mark my words, one of us will be married before he knows it. And there's no telling—I may be the victim," he finished, in a tone of gloomy foreboding.

But the Cub came back at them with unexpected spirit.

"You fellows disgust me," was his lofty retort. "I hope I have the manners of a gentleman. Some of us ought to have." And no amount of ballyragging could turn him from his course.

He not only played tennis with Miss Wilder, who proved but a dull pupil, but he walked with her, rowed with her on the dreaming river, and sat beside her hammock, reveling in that vast, new consciousness of his own significance, which her companionship invariably bestowed.

"And the score?" queried Halwyn of Miss Wilder as he met the two leaving the tennis-court one day. There was a delicate irony in his tone that caused the dimple to flash into transient view.

"Fifteen, love," was the answer; and if there had been irony in the question there was mockery in the reply.

"Why doesn't she take some one her own size," growled Halwyn subsequently. "We're big enough and old enough to take care of ourselves. But the Cub—good Lord! didn't we promise his mother to look after him?"

"We certainly did," rejoined Stanway thoughtfully. "I'll tell you what, Hal, I think I'll just get into the game myself. Some one ought to create a diversion."

Halwyn, who was walking up and down the room with his pipe in his mouth, sent a sharp glance toward the speaker, but made no direct answer. He did, however, remark in a disagreeably, didactic manner that Diana the Huntress is merely the type of all womanhood, leaving Stanway to accept the observation as a warning or not, as he saw fit.

Presently a startled exclamation broke the silence of the room. It came from Halwyn, who was gazing from the window with an expression of complete amazement.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he said softly. "Come here, Stan."

Stanway joined him, giving vent to a long, low whistle at the sight that met his eyes. "Old King!" he uttered bewilderedly—"King, who never says boo to any girl. King playing the gallant, and seeming to enjoy it, too!"

"Gad, Hal"—there was a ring of real admiration in his voice—"Miss Gray Eyes certainly knows her business. She is a sportswoman par excellence, our

Diana. But what becomes of the Cub?"

As a matter of fact, young Suffern's feelings had brimmed over a week previously. It had suddenly been borne in upon him that life without Miss Wilder would be as dull as a cloudy day, and he had told her so. Whereupon that young lady's eyes had become so entirely matter of fact, that the Cub winked in astonishment at the transformation.

"Dick, how old are you?" she demanded.

The Cub looked sullen. He was unutterably weary of references to his years, and in the present instance it seemed particularly shocking taste.

"There," she continued calmly, "your opinion of me has changed already. You're shocked that such a question could come into my mind at such a moment. And it proves, my dear boy, just what I want you to know. I am *years*"—the stress that she put upon the noun gave it the value of a lifetime—"older than you are. I'm nearly twenty-eight."

"I should love you if you were fifty," was the vehement answer.

The gray eyes were bent upon him very kindly and a trifle uneasily. Momentarily, the ardor of twenty-one is convincing, and she was wondering with inward quaking whether by chance the Cub could be of that dreadful sort that loves but once for all time. But a moment's study of his face reassured her.

"Very well," she bargained; "I won't ask you to wait that long. I'll promise to listen to you if by the last week in August I'm not able to win four games of tennis out of a set."

"That's just another way of saying yes," was the amused reply. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Don't be too sure. And remember, we're chums. No sentiment allowed."

When, later, she announced her intention of trying a few games with Mr. Kingsley, the Cub became gloomy. He watched their play with the growing conviction that the game of tennis was

not the only game being played upon that court.

Indeed, he rather shared Halwyn's conviction that the tennis-court might now be more properly called a court of love, but there was nothing to do but wait. If the growing intimacy between Miss Wilder and Kingsley made him writhe, he at least had the satisfaction of observing that she made no more progress with her new instructor than with himself. Her lack of skill was almost incredible.

Halwyn and Stanway now spent many patient half-hours ornamenting the turf, their soft hats pulled over their eyes, their knees clasped close, waiting for a chance to play, just as the former had predicted they would have to do. During such times Stanway had an opportunity to study the common enemy to some purpose. Her eyes were like a Scotch mist.

"You and I don't seem to be worth the chase," he remarked to his companion as they took their places, the other three having strolled off toward the river.

"I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,"

he continued. Then, irrelevantly, as they changed places for the second game: "She does it with her eyes. She's got the Cub, and she's got Kingsley. Ever notice how her eyes sometimes laugh at a fellow when the mist lifts?"

"Play!" snorted Halwyn in disgust. But, nevertheless, similar thoughts were running in his own mind. And the irony in his tone was a trifle more obvious when, finding himself beside Miss Wilder for a moment that evening, he once more demanded the score.

"Thirty, love," was the answer, as her eyes rested upon Kingsley, who was at that moment approaching them. And then the gray eyes came back to him with a glance impersonal and inscrutable enough to have done justice to the Sphinx.

One by one the July days had been put away in Time's great storehouse, the past, and the summer had attained its voluptuous August maturity. A

great, coppery moon, that had the effect of a huge, jolly face scattering the gloom with its beaming smile, had peered cautiously over the dark tree-tops, and, finding all well, cast discretion to the winds and climbed brazenly into full view.

Halwyn, the forsaken, who had followed his usual custom of withdrawing to his room after dinner, was so impressed by its genial knowing air that he could not refrain from a facetious, "Have a smoke, old man?" as he refilled his pipe. He may have imagined it, but he had a distinct impression that the jolly Man in the Moon gave him a wink, which meant that he had promised the Lady—whose youthful, wistful face many mortals have seen—to give up the habit. But, at any rate, Halwyn smoked on alone, but with a growing desire for companionship.

At last he knocked the ashes from his pipe and laid it on the mantel-shelf. Then he stretched and yawned. Then he hummed a snatch of an opera, and the words that matched the strain were: "I love thee not, and if I love thee—" Then he opened the door and descended the stairs.

"Where's everybody?" he inquired of Mrs. Merwin, whose generous form he descried in the shadow.

That lady shook her head helplessly. "I think they're all moonstruck," she answered bewilderedly. "The last I saw of them they danced off, holding hands and with wreaths on their heads. 'Playing pagan,' Natica called it. To my mind, it was more like playing maniac," she concluded confidentially. "And Mr. Stanway was the gayest of the lot."

Her listener was seized by an unfriendly, unreasonable desire to thump Stanway. Such trivial behavior was bad enough for twenty and thirty—designating the Cub and Kingsley—but for thirty-nine it was nothing short of scandalous. Amazing that Stanway could be such a silly ass!

"Natica insisted upon their asking you," Mrs. Merwin resumed, "but Mr. Kingsley said you had an important law case on your mind, and Mr. Stan-

way thought you had a touch of rheumatism."

"The——" began Halwyn explosively. "Hounds—curs—sneaks!" he finished under his breath, while Mrs. Merwin, whose little rill of talk trickled placidly on, was saying:

"But I suppose young people must have their nonsense. Do you ever look back, Mr. Halwyn, and think of your young days?"

Halwyn almost jumped from the chair into which he had thrown himself. Was the woman mad? His young days, indeed, and he but two years Stanway's senior, and Stanway was classed with the young folks! He replied rather stiffly, and Mrs. Merwin, kind soul, reflected that it was a shame for such a man to be allowed to fall into the grumpy habits of bachelorhood.

When taxed with their perfidy, Stanway and Kingsley behaved with shameless effrontery, while the Cub sat by in ecstatic silence.

"Did it for your good, old man," emitted Kingsley between puffs. "Prevaricated to save you."

"Yes, Billy," chimed in Stanway; "I made up my mind that I'd save you from the danger that lies in that girl's society, if I did it at the risk of my own safety. And now, do you appreciate it? Not on your life!"—and he took refuge in a bitterness too deep for words.

Miss Wilder, meanwhile, was experiencing the perfect serenity that comes from achievements. Often when she was alone the little dimple came and went mischievously, and it was only at rare intervals that a frown rumbled her brow, and a faint, troubled expression came into the eyes that Stanway declared like a Scotch mist.

"Nonsense!" she burst out impatiently on one such occasion, when her Better Self seemed to be looking her fixedly in the eye with an expression denoting amazement and reproach—it was after a little interview with Kingsley, in which she had been obliged to stop him rather hurriedly by telling him playfully that she couldn't listen to anything of that sort while she was distracted try-

ing to learn tennis. In the last week of August, if he could beat her four games out of a set—a shrug and a smile finished the sentence, and Kingsley looked as indulgently amused as the Cub had before him.

"Nonsense!"—she scowled at the Better Self as if it had been an actual presence. "Don't men get their noses, ribs, and collar-bones broken every year at football? There's an element of danger in every game that's worth playing. Broken hearts don't happen once a century. And if they did—well, perhaps the game is worth it." With this, her Better Self had to be content.

"You couldn't be induced to play a game with me?" she questioned, as Stanway emerged from the house in his tennis clothes a few days later. The dimple flickered wickedly, the gray eyes smiled.

"There's nothing in the world I should like better," he answered warmly, just as Halwyn, racket in hand, appeared in the doorway.

There was no denying the fact that Stanway was going the way the others had gone. The single-handed game between Miss Wilder and the Cub, which had become a three-handed game when Kingsley was gathered in, now became the four-handed game usual on the court earlier in the summer. Only now it was Halwyn, lover of man tennis, who sat dejectedly on the grass and looked on, instead of a girl with reproachful eyes.

The rôle of spectator enabled him to observe several things. For instance, that a halo of wind-blown dark hair gave a touch of mystery to Miss Wilder's face, and that there was something enticingly graceful in the swirl of a properly cut tennis skirt. This involuntary tribute to the enemy only made his mumbled reply to Stanway's grinning offer to allow him to play in his stead the more biting.

"When Diana hunts," he snapped, "wise men take to cover."

He had to admit, however, that in this particular case the precaution seemed unnecessary. If Diana hunted, she at least hunted other game.

"You haven't told me your score lately," he remarked urbanely to Miss Wilder. "How does it stand, now that you are playing with Stanley."

Miss Wilder bestowed a long, enigmatical glance upon him. "Perhaps you can guess," she threw out at last.

"I should hazard forty, love."

"You evidently don't think that I'm improving."

"I think you are so skilful that you have no need to improve," was his handsome rejoinder.

Here the conversation flagged, though they still continued to communicate by glances. It suddenly occurred to Halwyn that they had conversed a good deal in that subtle manner, usually to his mystification.

"You have the eyes of the Sphinx."

He had never intended to say it, but it was out before he realized it, and, to his relief, she passed the remark by as if too intent upon another line of thought to heed it.

"Aren't you tired of playing alone?" she smiled.

"Haven't you a somewhat abnormal taste for collecting scalps?" was his counter-query, and there for a time their mutual catechism ended. But to Stanway, subsequently, she announced that Mr. Halwyn was a woman-hater, or, at least, he didn't like her. The fervor of his reply caused a warning "Remember!" to drop from her lips.

"But it's such a ridiculous test, little girl," he protested. "You couldn't beat me at tennis in a thousand years. You're not the athletic type." And the little girl smiled and held her peace.

The days came and went, finding Halwyn ever more morose. They were not the good old days of do-as-you-please masculine liberty that had made Mrs. Merwin's a charmed place. Tennis was demoralized, the bachelor cohorts routed. But she did manage them remarkably well. Halwyn smiled grimly as he remembered how well.

And then, from their talk, he learned of the approaching contest, in which Miss Wilder was to meet her three victims successively. "Victim" was the

word that he used, but neither of the trio would have acknowledged it.

The day of the joust, as they laughingly called it, had arrived. The Cub, ruddy, and reeking with an importance that had in it a touch of mystery that set Kingsley to thinking, was the first contestant.

At the end of the opening game, in which Natica's wild balls kept the two onlookers dodging, the whim which had staked anything on this mock contest seemed to each of the three men more than ever absurd. The Cub's manner became absolutely proprietary, while Kingsley and Stanway wondered vaguely how the other fellows would take it.

And then, suddenly, something happened. The dimple went out of commission, and the Scotch mistiness in Miss Wilder's eyes gave place to a keen, spirited look that seemed to bespeak the intention to do or die. From the moment that the second game began to its end she seemed to be conscious of just one thing in the wide world: the game of tennis that she was playing.

As for the Cub, he felt as if he had suddenly landed in the midst of a tornado. Over the net came the balls, falling so close that his arm was almost strained from the socket in his effort to reach them.

"Play up, play up!" jeered Stanway, chuckling gleefully at the Cub's surprise and confusion. But a moment later his face sobered. He perceived that this was no chance luck on the lady's part. "That's the real thing," muttered Kingsley; "but, I say—where did she learn it?"

"Yes, where did she?" echoed Stanway, and then a slow, sickly grin stole slowly over both faces.

His first amazement over, young Suffern "played up" to the very best of his ability. But though in subsequent games he somewhat retrieved his fortune, he was no match for his antagonist. Miss Wilder won five games out of a set.

"You haven't played fair," he said hotly, when at last he got a word with her alone. "You've been fooling me all this time. Pretending not to know.

tennis—you! Why, you might be a champion—”

He broke off abruptly. “Natica Wilder!” The name brought up some vague association. Natica Wilder!

And then, suddenly, he remembered, and, in spite of his chagrin, laughed immoderately. And he, who was only an amateur of modest attainments, had been trying to teach her! He gazed at her, torn between admiration and anger.

“You never asked me whether I played tennis,” began Miss Wilder defensively, “and, besides, you weren’t exactly cordial, you know. I had to do something for the honor of my sex.”

She put her hand on his arm with a little motherly air.

“Now, don’t be cross, there’s a dear. You only imagined that you were in love with me because—well, it was June, and I was the only girl in sight. Forgive and forget.”

The dimple came out just here and made the forgiveness certain, though the Cub gloomily insisted that forgetting was an entirely different matter.

“Why did you challenge the other two?” he demanded suddenly, his ruffled feelings somewhat soothed. And, though Miss Wilder did not reply to his question, he laughed long and loud.

Kingsley, whose turn came on the following day, fared somewhat better, and with Stanway, still later, the game was nip and tuck. But in both cases Miss Wilder won her four games, covering her opponents with a chagrin which they manfully tried to conceal.

And the Cub, who had kept his own counsel, looked on with a grin that absolutely refused to “come off.” At the periodical spasms of mirth that seized him, Halwyn, who had wandered over to the court to see Miss Wilder’s suddenly acquired skill, eyed him curiously.

“You seem to be hysterical,” he observed, with his customary dryness, but the Cub returned his glance with something very like pity.

“You probably think that you’re observing a game of tennis,” was his astute reply. “Well, you are, and a mighty good one. But just let me tell

you something: that’s not the only game that’s been going on all this time.”

With this enigmatical remark, he turned his attention to the players, leaving Halwyn to his own thoughts, which ran somewhat in this wise: “Bagged them, every one. Neat work, by Jove! Wouldn’t have supposed she could do it. Unless I miss my guess, these games decide something. By Jove, I believe I could beat her! Like to try, anyway. But wherever did she get that form? Can’t understand it.”

A howl of joy from the Cub interrupted his musings. Stanway, chagrin and, perhaps, a trace of some deeper feeling in his face, was proffering his racket to the victor with a low bow. The girl laughingly refused it. Then she held out her hands to him and Kingsley.

“I haven’t been a bit of a gentleman,” she confessed. She would have said more, but Halwyn, who had a lonely sense of being on the outer edge of things, had approached the little group, and as Miss Wilder’s eyes met his the Sphinxlike quality of their glance stirred afresh. For the rest, he only knew that a moment later he was bowing low before her in mock humility, declaring himself a knight-errant, and craving the privilege of entering the tourney on the same conditions given those other knights whom he beheld worsted.

At his words the faces of his three friends took on an apoplectic hue, and as their startled eyes momentarily sought each other the truth, sometime suspected by the Cub, flashed upon all three. And here was Halwyn the discreet, who advised all men to take to cover when Diana hunted, begging to be admitted on the same terms. Even Miss Wilder laughed rather hysterically, but the Cub noticed a faint color under the clear white of her skin. He had never seen her blush before.

“You know not what you ask, Sir Knight,” she stammered.

“But still I ask it,” he persisted, and, somewhat reluctantly, his request was granted and the match arranged for the next day.

Miss Wilder passed a wakeful night and looked a trifle paler than usual when she took her place on the court. She had been adjured by the other three to "do old Billy up brown" for their sakes. Some way, she felt that she would be less a gentleman than ever if she did not do so, but she by no means felt her usual confidence. He played a better game than they, and, moreover, he would be intent on punishing her for the teasing part she had played so long.

"Play!"

His warning cry rang out ominously. She wished she had not been tempted into this struggle with him; wished—she hardly had time to know what, for the balls were being smashed over the net in a way that left no more time for thought of any kind.

With the opening game her nervousness passed, and at the end of the fifth the score stood two for her and three for Halwyn. If only she could win and make it a tie!

The sixth was a remarkably even game. First one and then the other scored, but it was noticeable that as Miss Wilder called "Forty all" her voice held a note of uncertainty. She was again losing confidence. And almost immediately Halwyn's crisp voice sounded.

"Deuce!"

"Vantage!"

There was a little ring of triumph in her voice, but almost immediately another imperturbable "Vantage!" robbed her of her brief triumph.

The sun dropped suddenly down into

that underworld where people absurdly yawn and greet the coming day as we prepare for the night. At the same instant Mrs. Merwin's despairing voice reached them.

"Dinner in five minutes, and it takes you so long to get out of those tennis clothes!" was her wail. The three spectators rose reluctantly, just as Miss Wilder missed a ball and Halwyn quietly scored game.

There was a flurry of talk and laughter, and the group moved toward the house. The twilight was deepening as swiftly as if a gray down were being sifted from the sky, and Halwyn's eyes shone in the twilight.

"To the victor——" he began tentatively.

The dimple danced into view.

"If the gallant knight knew what the others played for," remarked its owner, "he might not be so insistent."

But apparently the gallant knight must have divined, for a little later he might have been heard whispering:

"And, after all, Miss Sphinx, I guessed your secret."

At the same moment Mrs. Merwin's voice, now almost tearful, once more reached them.

"Natica! Mr. Halwyn! Where are you? Dinner is served."

"Just one thing," he urged hurriedly, as they made a feint of quickening their steps; "so long as you were hunting, why did you never hunt me?"

There was a burst of laughter, and then a stifled voice said:

"Silly one! One hunts different sorts in different ways."



The Parlor Socialist

BY WALLACE IRWIN

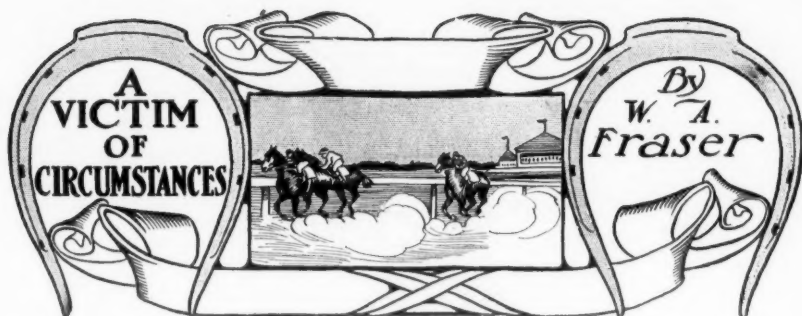
SHE'D tired of parties, bridge, and balls,
She'd worn out theaters and calls;
No lovers pleased her any more,
Yachting was equally a bore.
She tried a Yogi—*he* went stale;
So, finding every pleasure fail,
She slapped the System on the wrist,
And called herself a Socialist.

So now she sits up late o' nights
And reads what Mr. London writes.
She's also read "The Jungle" through
(Her father made his pile in glue).
She doesn't think that Gorki's nice,
But still she keeps his books on ice;
And Bernard Shaw's peculiar twist
She likes—for she's a Socialist.

She gives a tea just once a week,
With trimmings which she calls "unique"—
Expensive orchids here and there,
With now and then a head of hair
Above a gentlemanly voice
Which lisps of "Tolstoy's Higher Choice";
Quite "radical" becomes the gist
Of talk—for she's a Socialist.

Before a priceless inlaid desk
She sits in costume something-esque;
The precious carvings in the halls,
The gobelins upon the walls,
Stare as she writes, from time to time,
"Personal Property—a Crime."
The passing butler whispers: "Hist!
Be quiet! She's a Socialist!"

Only her father chuckles, "Pooh!"
(He owns Amalgamated Glue).
"Last year," he says, "it seems to me
Her fad was genealogy;
Next year, perhaps, she'll take a freak
To study law or ancient Greek.
She's so darned cute I can't resist
Watchin' her playin' Socialist!"



ENTON is going to ride Straddle Bug in the Beagle, Beth," Branstonsaid.

Mrs. Branstonschecked the *demi tasse* in its upward flight, holding it poised in her slender fingers. Her blue eyes expressed blank amazement.

"Why, Walter, Denton promised to ride Plowboy for me, and Mrs. Clancy knew it. That woman is—ugh!"

"It's Denton's own doing; he's vindictive against Kathleen Braund over something."

"I know; she gave him his *congé*. That was down at Belmont."

"Well, she's starting Moonstone in the Beagle, and Denton thinks he has a right good chance to beat her on Mrs. Clancy's Straddle Bug."

"Kathleen has her own troubles over a rider. A friend who was to have come for the mount has disappointed, and at the last minute she has had to put up Barry—she told me this evening. But Mrs. Clancy has taken Denton just to get that bracelet, and to score me—I know!"

"Well, *we're* dishd, anyway. There isn't one of the fellows here could ride a glacier without falling off, or going the wrong course, or something."

"And that means that Plowboy has to stand in the stable while Jane Clancy wins the Beagle bracelet. Walter, what business had you to put on fat?—one hundred and seventy pounds! You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Denton didn't desert because I'm fat."

Branston sipped his coffee thoughtfully. "By Jove! I've got it—and he'd send him up, too, like a shot; I know he would!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Of course he would, Walter."

"Who?"

"I'm as curious as you are."

"Oh! By Jove! yes; Raeburn, of course."

"Yes, of course; but who is Raeburn?"

"Why, it's Jim—I mean Jim Raeburn, the racing man. He's got a clinking apprentice in his stable at Clover Bar; I saw him gallop a horse there once. Gad! he can ride—hands like a woman; the very chap to humor old Plowboy."

"I don't want a professional jockey to ride for me in the Beagle."

"A professional couldn't. Jim's too clever to take out a license for this chap. He gets five pounds allowance, and, although he works in the stable, gallops the horses and all that, he can ride as an amateur."

"It won't do, Walter; you can't trust those stable-boys. The Clancy would bribe him to pull Plowboy—she's been boasting that she's going to win that bracelet."

"She won't get the chance; we'll just give them a little surprise. I'll write Raeburn to send this fellow Leigh up to-morrow by the three-o'clock, and we'll keep him here at Thistle Grove. They'll think I'm putting up a casual visitor on Plowboy."

"I don't like it, Walter—I don't want a stable hand in the house."

"I thought you'd do anything to beat out Mrs. Clancy. She'd entertain a burglar if she could score over you by it."

Branston played skilfully on the rivalry between the two women, and his wife yielded the point.

"We sha'n't see anything of him," Branston added; "he'll have his meals with James and the housekeeper. Couldn't get a room at the hotel, anyway—they're all full—sleeping on the floor—it's race week. I'll send a letter off by the eight o'clock mail. I'll put a quick delivery on it, and Jim'll get it in the morning—that's better than wiring. Jim'll send that chap, sure, and he'll arrive by the evening train."

Raeburn did not receive Branston's letter, because he was away in the West. Had he opened it he would have laughed heartily at Branston's mistake in thinking Leigh a stable hand. That Leigh, a Harvard man and a partner in Raeburn's steeplechase horses, was to be indented for by the pudgy Branston as a stable chattel to be expressed or otherwise delivered, was certainly droll.

But, as it happened, Leigh had received a letter three days previously from Kathleen Braund, asking him to come up to take a mount in the Beagle Steeplechase. He had deferred answering it, not knowing whether he could get away or not. Now he was about to take the very train Branston had specified in his letter to Raeburn, to answer Kathleen's request in person.

Branston, hoping that Raeburn would send the man, and wondering why he had not had a telegram of advice, met the six o'clock train.

His eye lighted up when he saw Leigh on the platform, and he darted forward eagerly, saying: "How d'you do, Leigh? You did get the letter at Clover Bar! We were afraid you weren't coming. I've got a cab here. We're going to put you up, so you won't have to go to a hotel."

Leigh didn't know his self-constituted host, but took it for granted that it was Kathleen's arranging. It puzzled him

a little how she had known that he would arrive by that train; but this was speedily driven from his mind by the voluble Branston's chatter.

At Thistle Grove he was taken in hand by the butler and shown to a room.

Leigh, anticipating with great pleasure a dinner graced by the presence of Kathleen, dressed with unusual care. It was the third tie that finally allowed itself to be coaxed into a decent bow.

Mr. and Mrs. Branston, having had the forethought to ask James to defer his evening meal until after he had served dinner, so that the young man might not eat alone, were at the little pause following the joint when James appeared with a troubled face and more than his usual deprecatory embarrassment.

"The young gentleman is down, sir," he said.

"What gentleman, James? Has any one called?"

"Mr. Leigh, sir."

"Oh, very well! Just serve the dessert and then take charge of him."

"I—pardon me, sir, the young gentleman is dressed."

"He's what?"

"He's dressed for dinner; and he asked for you, sir."

"Great Scott! I wonder if he thinks he is to dine with us, Beth?"

"Of course he does, Walter—that's like those jockeys. I knew you'd bring about a contretemps, having him here as a guest."

"Well, let James tell him—let him take him into supper."

"Walter, if you do that you'll anger him. If he's got notions, and carries a dress-suit about with him, he'll resent it, and he'll pull Plowboy out of revenge. This is your doing, and you've got to see it through. I'm going—I've got a headache."

Mrs. Branston's skirts swished reproachfully as she slipped from the room, and the husband sat with knitted brows for a minute. Then he said: "Here, James, take the young man to the veranda; tell him I'll be down pres-

ently—that dinner will soon be ready. Then reset this table for two—do the best you can in the way of dinner. Good Lord! I suppose I've got to go through the menu again. I *should* get fat playing this game."

Branston found his too-much-of-a-guest pacing the veranda.

"Ah! I suppose that run in the train has given you an appetite. James seems to be a little late with his dinner to-night," he said, in a patronizing way. He took a few turns with Leigh, the sudden revolution in the house routine holding his mind aloof from conversational topics.

"Dinner is served, sir." It was James' gentle voice relieving the somewhat strained situation.

As they sat down Branston said: "My wife has a terrific headache, so we'll have the dinner and horse business all to ourselves."

Leigh felt a pang of disappointment that Kathleen was not to dine with them. Indeed, why did she not appear for at least a word of welcome? That he had not seen her upon his arrival he had put down to the fact that she was probably dressing for dinner.

As they ate, Branston eyed Leigh critically. "Devilish clever-looking chap," he muttered. "He's a cut above most jockeys. Looks as though his people had been in a fair way of life. He's just the man I want—just the man."

Branston talked very little during dinner. He was turning over in his mind a subtle scheme that had really been behind his sending for a jockey. The winning of a bracelet was all very well—quite ambitious enough for his wife or Mrs. Clancy. Their little social rivalries and squabbles interested him far less than the fact that he needed the matter of a few thousands very badly, and thought he saw his way to getting them—saw it clearer than ever in the clever face of this young apprentice jockey, who, being addicted to dress clothes, must have ambitions. And ambition very often subverted even pronounced morals.

When James had served the coffee

and cigars, and departed, Branston, setting the bead in Leigh's glass dancing with a dash of new wine, asked: "Of course you know what we got you up in such a hurry for?"

"To ride in the Beagle Chase chiefly, I suppose."

"Yes; but how the deuce did you know the particular race? It wasn't mentioned in the letter, was it?"

"Oh, yes."

Branston studied the ash of his cigar. "It's deuced odd," he muttered; "I could swear I didn't write about any race in particular."

Of course Leigh thought he meant Kathleen Braund's letter.

"It's a poor race, the Beagle," Branston said, "from your point of view, I dare say. Riding in a ladies' race simply means a smile and 'thank you,' practically, if you do win. Now, I suppose you'd be better pleased with a race that held out the prospect of a thousand or so?"

Leigh stared curiously at his host. "I don't know—I hadn't thought of that," he answered.

"Oh, but you must, if you're to get on. And Plowboy is too good for such a jewelry-prize package as the Beagle, too."

"Miss Braund's horse—Plowboy—I take it?"

"Oh, no; he belongs to Mrs. Branstons. But how do you know Miss Braund? Did you ever ride for her?"

"Yes; I rode a pretty stiff race for her at Belmont; in fact, it was over that I became acquainted with her."

"He's a devilish familiar sort of chap," Branston muttered. "One would think he and Kathleen were in the same set."

"I had hoped to ride for Miss Braund in the Beagle," Leigh said.

"She'd have been glad enough to have you two days ago, but she's putting up a gentleman—a chap named Barry. But you've got a better horse, and we've got a better rider, so it's not an ill wind, eh? By Jove! though, do you think Miss Braund would recognize you if she saw you on Plowboy?"

"She might, I should think."

"I'd rather she didn't—understand?"

"I must confess that I don't, quite."

"Well, I've got an idea."

Leigh conjectured that his extraordinary host had a group of grotesque ideas.

"You see, the ladies here are all at sixes and sevens—they always are, really. My wife had a gentleman rider booked—Mr. Denton—but Mrs. Clancy stole him, and he thinks he's going to win on her horse, Straddle Bug. This clever lady is chuckling in her sleeve at leaving us in a hole over getting a good pilot for Plowboy, and we want them to think that we've picked up some gentleman—one who can't ride a little bit. Of course, according to the rules, you are a gentleman rider—that's safe enough, they can't object—but—" Branston conveyed to Leigh the balance of this remarkable communication with a nod and a most mysterious look from over the top of his wine-glass. "But I must say," he added, "that this game's not worth the candle. It isn't racing at all; it's ping-pong. Such a combination as Plowboy with you in the saddle is too good for it. My horse could win the New England Saturday. That's worth two thousand."

"Why not save him for it?"

"Mrs. Branston is bound to start him in the Beagle. It's too bad! If he wins it'll make a difference of fifteen pounds in his weight for the New England—with the penalties and allowances. It'll show up his form—I don't mind telling you, nobody about here knows how good Plowboy is; I've been waiting to work a coup with him. To tell you the truth, ever since I saw you galloping Raeburn's horse, I had you in mind. Quite casually Raeburn remarked that you were as trusty as your seat in the saddle was good."

"Very kind of Jim," Leigh remarked dryly.

Branston stared. "Jim!" he muttered. "Not much assurance to that!"

Leigh, not understanding the trend of his host's discourse at first, had imagined that time would clear up the mystery, but it was becoming more

hopelessly involved. There was some extraordinary misconception somewhere.

"Of course it'll do Plowboy good to run in the Beagle," Branston continued. "He hasn't raced for some time. If he were to run a bit green—he might, you know—blunder at his jumps, swing wide at the turns, or something, and get beaten, of course then I'd start him in the New England Saturday. He'd run a ten-pound better horse for a gallop in the other race, and the book-makers would lay twenty to one against him. The New England is a big betting race, while the Beagle is 'most entirely a drawing-room affair—gloves and a little champagne dinner the limit, I should say."

"I see," Leigh said thoughtfully. Indeed, he was beginning to find light. How in the name of all that was wonderful had this man got hold of him? Evidently Kathleen had turned him over to Branston, and the latter had some little game of his own on.

"And what do you think of it, Leigh?" Branston asked casually.

"It seems a devil of a mix-up," Leigh answered, out of his thoughts, forgetting Branston's point.

"Not at all—it's quite simple. If Plowboy doesn't run up to his best form in the Beagle, I can win twenty thousand in the New England, if he lands that stake—and he can."

"That's racing with a vengeance."

"By Jove! it's the way they play it here. Talk about professionals! You ought to see some of the qualified hunters—good enough to win the International Steeplechase. I'm out for an airing this time myself, and I didn't forget what Raeburn said about you, Leigh. You'd like to have something worth while for coming up here, wouldn't you? It ought to be good for a thousand. You could put that away as a nest-egg. Of course, if you stick to Raeburn, he'll put you in a way by and by so that a thousand won't seem much, but now it's a lot of money, isn't it?"

"It is."

"Well, that's all right. Of course, if Plowboy wins to-morrow, Mrs. Branston

will be very pleased, but you needn't knock him about if he seems out of it, because I'll start him Saturday, and there'll be nothing gained in driving him to the limit in the Beagle if he can't win, will there?"

"No, there's nothing gained by breaking a horse's heart; if he's beaten, he's beaten."

"That's true; I'm glad you look upon it in that light. I'm very fond of Plowboy, and I don't want to see him knocked about—understand?" And Branston's chubby face assumed a lugubrious look that was meant to express benign consideration for the loved Plowboy; but one eye lay hidden behind a shrouding lid as the other cocked itself in an impudent gaze of fraternal villainy.

"I think I understand what you mean, Mr. Branston," Leigh said, with slow deliberation.

"Well, *think* some more about it, and we'll get together about this scramble over sticks. When I play any game myself I like to gamble—a game is no game at all without ducats in sight. Guess I'll see if Mrs. Branston needs anything. You can turn in when you like. Amuse yourself with that box of cigars there—they're not bad smokes."

The "Garcias," long and black, were certainly good smokes. Leigh tested their continuance as a delight to the full limit as he pondered over the enigmatical rôle some devil of discord had cast him for. There was no starting-point in the whole devilish thing. His morally oblique host had credentials up to a certain point; he was a friend of Kathleen Braund's, he knew of her letter, he was acquainted with Raeburn, and he knew Leigh's name. Kathleen must have arranged for him to entertain Leigh. But also, most undeniably, he took Leigh for some sort of a paid horseman, a man susceptible to a bribe. In the end Leigh grew weary of seeking for a solution, concluding to wait until he had seen Kathleen before deciding on a course of action.

In the morning when he appeared Branston was waiting to take him for an exercise gallop on Plowboy. The

horse was a good one, there was no doubt about that; a big, symmetrical, clean-jumping son of old Hanover.

Leigh had felt inclined to refuse the mount in the Beagle—it would be the easiest way out of it; but the exhilaration of the smooth-galloping Plowboy under him, the sweet uplift of heart as the horse rose with a gliding swoop at his jumps, set the young man thinking of how he would like to kill two birds with this true-speeding stone. He owed Denton something in the way of retaliation over that Belmont race; it would be sweet revenge to gallop home in front of Straddle Bug, take the bracelet from under the itching fingers of Denton, and present it to the owner of the gallant Plowboy. And he would punish the man who had paid him the double compliment of mistaking him for a stable hand, and a bribable one, at that, by winning as easily as Plowboy was capable of. All this was subservient to what he might learn when he had seen Kathleen. He had a but half-entertained twinge of satisfaction in the thought that he would also beat Barry, whom Kathleen had been somewhat hasty in putting on Moonstone, he thought.

At breakfast Leigh adroitly drew from his host that Miss Braund was not stopping with Mrs. Branston, as he had supposed, but was at Colonel Lessard's. So he went to the Lessards' to lay the matter before Kathleen. And as he plodded along one road, the girl, galloping by another, swung up the drive to Thistle Grove for a chat with Mrs. Branston.

"What's this about Denton's riding Straddle Bug for Mrs. Clancy, Beth?" Kathleen asked. "Thought he was going to ride Plowboy for you."

"So did I, Kathie dear, but that impossible woman has inherited trade instincts, and gets the best always."

"Too bad—it's a shame. My friend hasn't turned up, either—not a word from him—isn't that like a man, Beth? Barry can't do Moonstone justice—he's a peppery chap. Denton's a sneak; he'll aggravate Barry, and he'll get mad, and then poor Moonstone, poor me! But

you're worse off; Plowboy will have to stand in his stall, won't he?"

"Oh, no; we're out-Clancying the Clancy—at least, Walter is. I'm a zenana lady."

"You're what?"

"Well, Walter's got one of his plots on; you know what they're like, Kathie—generally wind up in a frightful muddle. This one will, too, I expect. Walter sent away for a jockey—he's not a licensed jockey, you know, a sort of stable hand that can ride as a gentleman. He's our guest—Walter dines with him."

"Beth!"

"That's right. He came down last night in a dress-suit, and poor James—long-suffering James—gave notice that if anybody but himself were allowed at his table in that regalia he'd leave. As Walter says, we were up against it; a jockey in a dress-suit is a difficult proposition, isn't he, Kathie? We daren't offend him for fear he'll pull Plowboy; so Walter is entertaining the gentleman, while I'm in zenana."

"It's a jolly mix-up—one of Walter's best, I should say. But if the fellow can ride, you may beat Mrs. Clancy, then you won't mind, will you? I was going to ask if I might come to dinner to-night, but I needn't now, I suppose. I'm almost tempted to, though; Duveigne is coming to the Lessards' for dinner, and I think I should rather take a chance on your jockey. Good-by; I hope you win the bracelet—I've given up all idea of it myself."

So Leigh did not meet Kathleen Brand until, striding moodily across the paddock in Branston's green silk jacket before the first race, which was the Beagle, he heard his name uttered in a voice that rose from a soft modulation to a higher-pitched ultimate of surprise. Raising his head suddenly, he looked straight into the violet eyes of that much-astonished young lady.

"You here, Banfield?" The girl's voice suspicioned a corrosive of resentment as she continued with: "Didn't you get my letter?"

"Yes."

"Ah, you did? I see; you didn't care to ride for me. I didn't know you were such a great friend of Mrs. Branston's."

"Neither did I till her gentle husband kidnaped me at the railway-station last night; and when you make any more dates for me, Kathleen, please explain to your friends that I've got quixotic notions about racing."

"I don't understand."

"I don't, either—I've given up trying—it's too difficult. I'm going to win this race—that seems the only easy thing about the whole business—and then clear off to Clover Bar."

"You're riding Plowboy—that's Mrs. Branston's colors. I thought—are you stopping at the Branstons'? Is there another man there—a stableman, a jockey?"

"Yes; I'm that other man, too."

"Such a mix-up—it's quite Branstonian. Branston is a regular 'Handy Andy.'"

"He's handy at the newer commercialism—frenzied finance. I'm promised a thousand for pulling my horse in this race."

"A thousand dollars for pulling Plowboy?"

"Yes; when you were turning me over to your friends you should have warned them that I was born of rich but honest parents—I rather pride myself upon that anomalous entrée."

"I had nothing to do with your going to them; I'm cross about it. I kept Moonstone without a rider till the last minute yesterday, waiting for you. Didn't you get a letter from Branston? He wrote away for some one to take the mount on Plowboy, and you seem to have turned up in answer to that letter—he met you at the train."

"Never heard of him before yesterday; but I must say he knew of me. He's got the most charmingly ingenious scheme of brigandage. There he comes now. Say, Kathleen, I only stuck to this deuced thing because I thought you had arranged for me to ride Plowboy. I think I ought to strip off this jacket and strangle Branston with it. I ought to refuse to ride the horse."

"It's too late, Banfield—it would only make talk. I don't understand the thing at all, any more than you do, but you can win with Plowboy, I think, and—well, Mrs. Branston has nothing to do with her husband's disgraceful tactics, I'm sure of that. Ride Plowboy to please me, won't you?"

"I will if you'll not let on who I am. I don't want penitence, and embarrassment, and the pudgy Branston's sulks, when I upset his sweet villainy by winning. I'll take the evening train back to Clover Bar, and that'll end it."

Before Kathleen could answer, Branston, hurrying up, cried cheerfully: "Hello, Kathleen! I see you know Leigh—he told me he's ridden for you. I'm sorry for Moonstone and Barry. It's time to mount, Leigh; they're going out."

Branston walked at Leigh's stirrup to the paddock gate, saying: "Plowboy's a bit notional; if he's in a stubborn mood to-day and won't gallop, don't worry about it—we'll try him again in the New England."

"I understand just what you want, Mr. Branston; I understand you perfectly, and we'll give them a bit of a surprise to-day with Plowboy."

"Yes, I'll give him the surprise of his life, crooked little sweep!" Leigh muttered, as he turned onto the course.

Trooping across the infield to the start, Barry recognized Leigh. He drew Moonstone alongside of Plowboy, saying: "Hello, Leigh! What the deuce are you doing here on that critter? Thought you were going to ride for Kathleen—she said she was waiting for you."

"I don't know, Barry; I'm a changeling."

"Glad you're here, anyway, old boy; you can take it out of Denton again. The race is between you two. Moonstone isn't much."

As they grouped at the start, Denton stared when he saw Leigh. He nodded coldly, and drew Straddle Bug to the outside.

"Watch out, Leigh; the starter is going to drop the bunting," Barry said.

His voice was drowned by the roar

of struggle. It was like the sudden burst of a storm. The crunching grip of iron-shod hoofs in the turf was like the ripping of an electric cloud; the wind shrieked and crackled at the tormented silks; the gasping intake of lung air by wide nostrils was like the snarl of animals of prey in a charge.

To Kathleen and the Branstons sitting in the stand there was just the smooth glide of a beautiful picture, like the easy turn of a kaleidoscope with its jeweled color.

Out in front they could see the big brown, Straddle Bug, racing, his mouth wide open, and at times a sharp, vicious twist of his ungainly head as he fought against the restraining bit. At his heels was a somber blotch of black—Moonstone; and behind, trailing the field, loped Plowboy, the sun kissing his blood-bay coat to the color of ripe wine.

"I got a bad start!" growled Branston. "They caught my man asleep."

"Just wide-awake," corrected Kathleen; "Mr. Leigh lets his horse do the galloping while he thinks for him. He's a clever rider."

"Gad! he is," Branston muttered, leering inwardly. "Plowboy ain't going to win if he can help it; he's got his eye on that thousand. It isn't the first time he's pulled a horse. They're all alike—money talks with the best of them."

One turn of the course, a mile galloped off stride by stride, the stringing and unstringing of mighty muscles, the spurning hoofs, the eager-stretched necks, the lust of strife of the thoroughbreds, and in the stand the weak babbling interpretation of it all by the coveters of the jeweled bauble.

Out in front, over mud wall and rail, always safe in the lead, swung the awkward-gaited Straddle Bug; and Mrs. Clancy looked at her rounded wrist, seeing there with too vivid fancy the blood-gleam of the ruby-studded circlet. She watched covertly Beth Branston's face, that was serious to the edge of comicality; for Plowboy still galloped as steadfastly in the trail of the others as though he indeed turned an honest furrow for some husbandman.

"It's between you and Mrs. Clancy, Kathleen," Plowboy's owner said despondently. "I think you're more fortunate in your rider than I am. It's no use—one can't trust a professional racing man. Somebody's money is keeping Plowboy back there when he ought to be out in the lead."

Branston looked suspiciously at his wife. She was abnormally sharp at finding out about his escapades—had she discovered his arrangements with Leigh?

Kathleen, letting her violet-gray eyes rest on Branston's, said: "Even if any one were foolish enough to offer Mr. Leigh a bribe to pull your horse, Beth, he wouldn't be guilty of such a despicable act. I know him well."

Something in the girl's eyes and voice caused Branston to shift his apprehension to her. He squirmed uneasily. Had Leigh told her anything as they talked in the paddock?

"It isn't the man's fault," he said; "it's Plowboy's. He's got a sulky streak on and simply won't gallop. Ah, by Gad! there goes Redwing—he's down and out—and Silver Tail, too—over-jumped himself at that mud wall."

"See Plowboy coming now, Beth—he's galloping over his horses," Kathleen cried joyfully. Her hand had fallen on Mrs. Branston's wrist, and in her exultation over Plowboy's gallop the fingers gripped the soft arm until its owner shrank from the pain.

"One would think you didn't own Moonstone," Mrs. Branston said, with a nervous laugh. "Do you want me to win, Kathie dear?"

"Damn the fellow! What does he mean?" Branston muttered.

For now, swinging around the lower turn, Plowboy, picking up and dropping behind him horse after horse, galloped with his muzzle at the floating tail of the big brown, half a length in front of the black.

"You'll win the bracelet sure, Beth," Kathleen said.

Mrs. Branston looked at her curiously. Was it possible for a woman to hold such abnegating friendship? There was an exultant ring in the girl's soft

voice as she added: "I know what Leigh is like—I mean your rider, Beth."

"And I misjudged him! He is honest, even if he is a horseman. I'll give him a hundred dollars out of my own pocket. Walter—do you hear, Walter? I hope you put a bet on Plowboy for the jockey, so that he'll get something nice for winning."

Kathleen thought of the thousand offered from the other side of the house; the two measures for a man's honor, with the larger one for the lapse of it, as she watched first her own game little mare fighting bravely against the two big-striding horses in front, and then the exquisite horsemanship of Leigh as he waited for the cracking up of the loose-jointed brown that had thrown away so much of his strength in rebellious haste.

Leigh was like an angler playing with slender rod a battling fish; but Kathleen heard a voice behind her saying: "That jockey on Plowboy is trying to throw this race. Why doesn't he go on and take the lead? He's pulling the head off that horse. A gentlemen's race is always crooked."

Coming to the last mud wall at the foot of the stretch, Denton felt Straddle Bug shrink as he steadied him for the leap, and foolishly drove with his spurs at the tiring horse. The pain of the rowels cut to the soft heart of the brown; he faltered, struck, collapsed like a broken chair, and sent Denton sprawling in front of the lifting Plowboy. Death glided between them and hid in the hollowed domes of the reaching hoofs, and for Leigh there was but a second's time for choosing.

He made it; a mighty wrench at the bay's head, a fault, a little cloud of dust—he struck hard. The stand gasped. Now Plowboy skids twenty feet over the crushed grass on the point of his shoulder, just clear of Denton, and his rider rolls brokenly, crashing into the sod; then he turns on his back, his arms widespread, like a grotesque pasteboard doll.

"My God!" Kathleen gasped, as she buried her eyes in her hands.

She could feel the stand vibrate as men and women sprang to their feet.

A woman voiced hysterically: "He's killed!"

The suspense was smothering her, she must look. In mockery, like a dark shadow, she saw Moonstone glide past the winning-post.

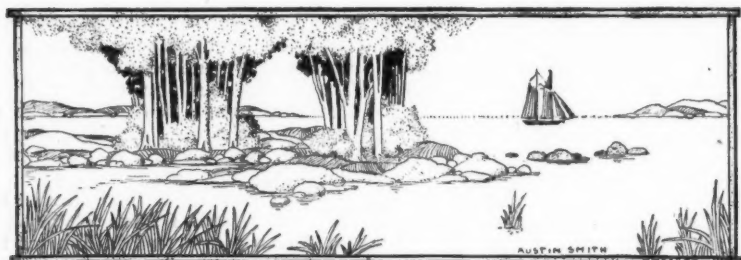
Some one cried exultantly: "He's up! He's all right!" Then the malicious voice behind her snarled: "Served him right if he'd been killed—he deliberately pulled Plowboy into the jump. The race was fixed for Moonstone to win."

Mrs. Branston leaned over and whispered in Kathleen's ear: "I'm glad you've won, Kathie. Did you hear what

that man said? Do you suppose there's anything in it? That fellow did keep Plowboy back as long as he could. Why did he pull him into that jump? Poor Plowboy is lame—see him limp. Don't look at me like that, Kathie dear. I don't mean that it's your fault—I'm glad you won—but Mrs. Clancy would do anything."

"Stop, you miserable little woman! I wish I could tell you something—I ought to! Perhaps I will later. I'm going now to pet Moonstone and Barry for their good race."

Later, when Branston paid Leigh a covert compliment upon his clever ride, something broke loose; but Branston just squeaked out with a whole skin.



MIDSUMMER

ONLY to lie on the crest of the hill,
 Where the wind-waved grass can never be still;
 Only to know the kiss of the breeze
 And the voice that sighs through the trembling trees;
 Only to feel the strength of the sun
 When the clouds are rent and his bondage done;
 And to watch the shadows that shift and veer
 Till his foes are fled, and the skies are clear;
 Only to muse on the fathomless blue,
 Deep as your eyes, and to dream of you:
 Dear, though your dwelling is far, far away,
 Yours is the heart of the whole summer day.

JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD.

THE CYNICISM OF JIMMY PRESTON



BY MARY H. VORSE



O save his brother's reputation, my son Jimmy took the flowers round the back way through the orchard. There were a great many of these flowers, arranged with a precision that raised them from the level of a mere bunch of roses to a "floral tribute." One would have thought the young lady for whom they were destined was a monument or the cemetery on Decoration Day.

I sighed; the inevitable had happened. My eldest son, Osborn, was in love. I had, I think, been preparing for this hour ever since Osborn was born. I know, of course, that one's boys must fall in love—many times, most likely—and marry some time, but when I saw Jimmy sneak off with that bouquet, all my preparations were as nothing, and I felt unreasonably angry with Miss Fairweather. She was visiting our neighbors, the Powerses, and was the first girl Osborn had ever looked at.

Meantime, while my eye was following the furtive maneuvers of Jimmy, and my heart was full of fears for Osborn, my tongue was obediently making talk with our new minister, a muscular young Christian, who had the air of a reformed prize-fighter. Perhaps I am unjust to him, but a minister ought to have some intuitions; he should not have made me go through the kind of conversation that I was at that moment enduring. "Yes," I was saying, as naturally as if I were not deep in the af-

fairs of my sons; "Osborn goes to college next fall. . . . Yes, it is true—I suppose he does stand a chance of making the varsity his first year. . . . Oh, very gratifying! . . . Yes, yes, indeed, the strongest men do make the best Christians. . . . I am glad to hear you say so. A mother likes to feel her boy has an influence for good. . . . Of course, you're quite right; *in corpore sano*. . . . Yes, I agree with you quite. They ought to play when they play and work when they work, but do they *ever* work? . . . Well, I am glad you feel that way. Of course we ought all to cooperate with our children's sports. . . . Oh, so much more enlightened! I'll tell him what you say. He'll appreciate your appreciation. . . . Oh, don't tell *him* that! . . . Yes, I suppose the captain of a high-school nine is important in his little world. I'll tell him about your Bible readings. I'm sure he'll be interested."

That is the sort of platitude that I, a woman of average intelligence, had to listen to and, in my turn, talk to my spiritual pastor. My son Osborn, whose nickname among "the fellows" is Bite—I am sure I don't know why—is by way of being a local celebrity. I am given to understand that he is not only "great" on track athletics, but can "knock the stuffin's out of any other kid of any high-school team."

In plain English, he "has 'em all strung to death." Of course, as our new minister says, this is all very gratifying to a parent. He is sure to make

his mark in college, the principal of the high school assures me. I am glad it is in baseball instead of football.

Osborn is a boy with a great deal of force of character, and it shows nowhere to greater advantage than the admirable way in which he has trained his younger brother.

Jimmy is twelve, a hard-shelled age when all women are distasteful, and even mothers don't loom as large as mothers would wish to. A stern age, the age of twelve, a cave-dwelling, cruel age of tribal warfare, but an age when the head of one's tribe has power.

While I exchanged platitudes with the minister, I watched Jimmy from my seat by the window. I heard the whoops of a little boy whom I have learned to know as "that fresh Tyler kid," and I saw Jimmy and his haystack of flowers dodge into the corn. I realized that as long as he might be intended to keep scandal from our door; I knew what discipline it meant that he went at all. I knew he had "no use for flowers, anyway," and I could imagine how he hated to face the Powerses' grinning maid. My sympathy was with him when I saw him slide through a hole in the Powerses' fence, and jerk the tribute savagely after him.

Osborn's example has intensified all his primeval contempt of woman. He has been reared in Osborn's simple and adequate philosophy, some of which has penetrated even to me:

"Never let a kid your own size lick you.

"Don't think you are all hell because you can smoke a cigarette and keep down your dinner.

"A fellow can't play ball if he's got the swelled head, any more than if he'd got the mumps.

"I haven't much use for girls—they take too much time."

And now the teacher of this philosophy was making himself beautiful with the purpose of calling on a girl.

I heard him tramping up and down his room. And as soon as the minister left, I walked past the door and saw him fussing with a necktie before the glass. I have always protested against

untidy clothes, and now my words were blossoming into deeds—and I am sure you will understand when I say I felt a twinge, for it's hard to have your boy do for a foolish girl he scarcely knows things that his mother has had to work to get him to do.

Soon he came down-stairs and began picking out "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean" with one finger. He went out and looked down the street; he came back and began on "My Bonny" again.

When Jimmy came at last Osborn was standing on the steps, waiting.

"Where have you been?" he said shortly. "Where's your answer?"

"Where d'you s'pose I've been—fish-in'?" asked Jimmy, with bitter sarcasm.

"Where's your answer?" Osborn repeated, and I caught in his tone the warning that it wasn't good for younger brothers to fool with him.

"She says she'll go," growled Jimmy. "D'you see her yourself?"

"Yes," answered Jimmy. "She was in the hammock." I felt glad that Jimmy had been spared the maid.

"What'd she do with the flowers?"

"I dunno."

"Don't you get gay," warned his brother.

"H'should I know what she did with the old flowers? I s'pose she stuck 'em in her clothes."

I pictured Miss Fairweather with the floral tribute "stuck" in her clothes.

"Did she like 'em?"

"Sure she liked 'em," Jimmy asserted.

"She said: 'For me! How lovely!'" He mimicked Miss Fairweather in a high falsetto. Then a heart's cry burst from him.

"She ain't much! She's a thin old maid! Betcher'n ice-cream she can't even play ping-pong!"

"Aw, you keep still!" said my eldest son genially.

And I saw him swing down the road, his shoulders squared, as well set up and as good looking a lad of seventeen as you'd find in a day's walk. I don't say so just because I'm his mother. I know it's so. When I'm in the street or in the cars, I watch the other boys, and it's seldom I see as manly, fine looking a

boy. I couldn't help sighing again as I returned to my sewing.

All my preparation was of no use. I couldn't comfort myself with saying it had to come, and my mind went back to a little boy called Osborn I should never see any more. A big, broad-shouldered fellow who can look over my head has come to take his place. I am often lonely for the little lad I could keep so safe by my side. Mothers have these foolish thoughts often.

Jimmy came through the house. His hands were plunged so deep in his pockets that he almost split his coat in the back, and he kicked the heel of one shoe with the toe of the other. I felt sorry for the lad. My sister Maria called to him: "Mercy me, Jimmy, can't you walk without kicking your shoes to bits? Take your hands out of your pockets. One would think you spoil your clothes for fun!" My sister is a dear good woman and devoted to my children, but it is odd how childless women lack insight, poor things!

Jimmy looked at me with an uneasy eye. I knew he suspected I was "next." To put his mind at rest and to divert my sister Maria's attention—she cannot understand it does boys no good to be nagged—"I suppose Osborn's out at practise," I remarked cheerfully.

"Bite's gone——" began Edith, who had met her brother on his way to the Powerses'.

"My dear," I interrupted, "please get me my blue silk. It's in my room;" and, with a grateful glance at me, Jimmy escaped, knocking the heel of one shoe on the toe of the other.

"That boy's getting really sulky," said my sister Maria. Now I knew that he was not sulky, only more worried than he had ever been in his life. Osborn has been his hero without reproach. Jimmy has always considered it an honor to be Osborn's brother. There is but one Osborn in his simple creed, and Jimmy is his prophet. The little boys look up to him because he is so near the throne, and now this hero had "gone back" on all his philosophy, recanted openly without shame, without an excuse, and was going to take a

"girl" out in broad daylight to go to walk.

Jimmy had learned that heroes are human, and that men are not to be counted on.

I longed to go and comfort the boy, and perhaps in turn be comforted, for, though I knew it was foolish, I was sad enough myself. But Jimmy is of the age whose jealous manliness one must be careful not to offend. I never make the mistake of kissing him when there are people around, as his aunt does. I never call him dear—only sometimes when I steal into his room when he is gone to bed at night. He doesn't mind then. Dear me, how hard it is to have one's babies grow up, and how one worries about it all!

I called at the Powerses' at a time I knew Miss Fairweather would be at home. I found her a thin, pale little thing of about twenty-one, with the kind of face that people who admire that type call "piquant." I wondered what it was that Osborn saw in her, for she wasn't at all the sort of girl that I would have thought he would admire. She was ladylike, but rather overdressed, I thought. I wondered, too, what a young lady of that age wanted with my honest, good-looking boy, and I felt cross enough with her when I reflected that she would throw him over for the first older man who came along.

For all I watched Osborn so carefully, I couldn't see that his character was in the least affected. It was Jimmy who grew morose and sullen and dis-trait. He went through all the emotions I should not have been surprised to see in Osborn. It was even Jimmy who snubbed his sister when she joked Osborn about Miss Fairweather.

Jimmy would have been glad to have him carry on his friendship with Miss Fairweather by stealth, if he needs must see her at all, but Osborn gloried in his shame, and he threw himself into this first love-affair with the same enthusiasm that has made him so good a ball-player. In fact, it absorbed him to such an extent that he had no time for ball. I don't suppose I should have noticed

that he was neglecting his nine, or cared very much about it, if it hadn't been for Jimmy. For I couldn't help seeing the whole affair from his point of view. He saw what was happening with amazement, then with growing horror, and then, when it became an established fact that Bite wasn't playing ball as he ought to, that he went to Miss Fairweather's instead of to practise, in his own mind he sat in stern judgment of his brother and found him guilty.

There are times when I feel I am all my family rolled into one, so clearly do I see any given event from their several points of view, and I find myself instinctively taking the side of the one who feels most keenly about it.

For three weeks Jimmy lived in silent misery, and Osborn in his fool's paradise, ignoring conscience, who, in the shape of Jimmy, attended his steps, suggesting: "Ain't you goin' to practise to-day, Bite?"—and whom Osborn would silence with a good-natured "Aw, mind your own business, kid!"

It was at the strawberry festival of our church that the climax came. Osborn had gone for Miss Fairweather, who was going with him as his guest. How magnificently he intended to do things, I guessed, as he negotiated a loan from me, to be repaid from his next month's allowance. Our own home roses were not good enough to send to this fastidious young lady, I had noticed. Osborn now went to the florist's and sent the long-stemmed kind that don't grow in simple gardens.

For a wonder, Jimmy accompanied me. He had been unusually gloomy all day, and I felt some sort of a crisis was approaching, and that it had to do with the ball-game next day. It was dark as we walked down the street together, and just in front of us was a knot of little boys.

"Betcher we don't beat to-morrow," said one, whose voice I recognized as that of the fresh Tyler kid. "Betcher they hit Bite all over the field."

"And betcher we knock the stuffin's out o' 'em, anyway," said another.

"What's the matter with Bite Preston? He ain't playin' ball any more,"

and this time it was Dave Rogers, Jimmy's best friend, who spoke.

"Aw, Bite he's got a girl!" the fresh Tyler kid announced, as if that explained any human weakness.

"Sure, he's awful soft on that Fairweather girl!" agreed another boy, in the tone of one who says: "The whole town knows that!"

And that was why Jimmy slunk into the strawberry festival behind me, and, instead of joining the other boys in their onslaught on the strawberries and ice-cream, ate his at the table with some of us grown-ups, disappearing afterward into the outlying shadows. I learned later that he had the melancholy pleasure of licking the fresh Tyler kid, but that was small balm to one who has heard the fair name of his hero smirched, and who realizes that it is his hero's fault. Hearing, as I did, with Jimmy's ears, the festival seemed full to me of people talking of Osborn, and he and Miss Fairweather seemed the most conspicuous people there. Miss Fairweather wore a very elaborate pink organdy and a great picture hat that made her seem even smaller than she was, and Osborn looked down on her with an air of fatuous affection. A half-grown-up boy in love isn't a heroic sight, even in his mother's eyes, but there's an element of the tragic about him to her when he is only ridiculous to the rest of the world. So when the others saw a good-looking lad mooning over a pretty girl, I saw many other things.

There are many tragedies which all mothers must face, and they are most of them based on the great tragedy that we lose our children daily. Your boy of to-day isn't the one who kissed you good night last night, although in your blindness you think he's the same.

And each mother according to her nature has her own moment when the loss is especially poignant. Some will tell you the day your baby isn't your baby any more is the worst of all. That is bad to face, but, after all, you're glad that he is strong and large of his age. It may be there's something like a lump in your throat the first time you see him

strutting around in absurd little breeches, but there's pride in your heart. I've heard of mothers who've wept when curls had to be sacrificed; what, indeed, haven't we mothers wept over and agonized over? But to me none of these things is so sad as when one's son first falls in love. You and he are the only two people in the world who don't laugh at it, and the heart-breaking of it is he'll join the rest in the laugh soon enough, and leave you alone to your tragedy; for you don't give your boy away when he marries. It's the first girl he cares for seriously who steals him from you. It's "good-by, son," in earnest now. There are things now he can't tell you, and you know that all the time there will be more silence between you. You know he has told *her* things that you would give all you own to hear, that before her the secret places of his heart have opened.

Haven't you watched your children from far off talking and talking? It's a stream that never stops. Don't you wish you could know what they say? Why are they suddenly quiet when you come? Where have you failed that they've so little to tell you? What divides you? Do they hear you knocking to be let in, do you suppose? Perhaps on their side of the wall of silence they are knocking, too, and dull ears can't hear. It has always been so from the time they were very little. No mother can quite remember when the silence between her and her children grew up. When were your eyes blind, mothers? When did you fail to understand? And you know, unless your eyes are sealed, that the girl your boy loves knows about your boy things you never can know. All he thinks and hopes and fears he gives her, and she doesn't care. He tells her the things you most anxiously watch to find out, bits of precious knowledge that you learn, as it were, by stealth. She has the key to the secret that you so painfully piece together, only it doesn't interest her—and why, indeed, should it? He isn't *her* boy.

So it seems to me that your boy is gone from you from that moment, and

the tragedy of his marriage isn't that his wife has taken him away from you, but that she may, if she will, hurt him so much more than the rest.

So for me the only important people there that night were Miss Fairweather and Osborn, though I dare say some one else might have told you that they had seen all our town eating strawberries. If I had noticed them, they seemed important because of Jimmy. It was hard for me to talk politely to those about me, so much I wished I might hear what Osborn was saying to the girl beside him; so much I longed to know where in the shadows Jimmy was lurking. It is very much to our credit that we mothers do so few dishonorable things, that we don't, in our great anxiety, all become listeners at keyholes and surreptitious readers of letters. Some of us do, I believe, and our children find us out, and never forgive us.

Well, I couldn't, of course, hear what they were saying, but I thought at least I might do something for Jimmy. I couldn't bear the thought of him glooming alone in the dark, so I went to look for him to set him to work at helping about something. I found him and Dave Rogers behind the lilacs. Jimmy was saying in a savage tone: "I'll learn him to talk fresh."

At sight of me he jumped to his feet, and Dave drifted softly away, as other boys do when somebody's mother puts in an appearance. Just then I heard Osborn's voice at the other side of the lilacs. So, after all, I had my desire.

"You know you're coming to-morrow to see me pitch," he was saying.

"No, I can't," Miss Fairweather answered, and I thought there was a little embarrassed note in her voice.

"Why, you promised!" cried Osborn, and I couldn't bear the hurt note he said it in. I tell you, I longed to give that Miss Fairweather a piece of my mind.

"Well," she explained, "I thought I could when I said I would, but I can't—that's all."

"Nonsense! of course you can. You've got to," Osborn informed her, in his head-of-the-clan voice.

"There is a friend of mine coming down to-morrow—" Miss Fairweather was more and more embarrassed.

"Oh, if that's all, bring her along," Osborn genially commanded.

"It isn't a girl," said Miss Fairweather, and her tone was the friendliest possible, as if she were talking to another girl. "It's a man. I didn't mean to tell before, but we've gotten to be such good friends in the little while we've known each other that I don't mind telling *you*. It's my fiancé, Doctor Price, who's coming."

And when I tell you that she told him this in the tone of one doing you a favor, I needn't tell you more about *her*.

"Who?" Osborn asked sternly.

"The man I'm engaged to," she replied. "So, you see, I've got to be with him. We must go now, or Mrs. Powers'll wonder where I am."

All she was thinking of was to avoid a scene that she was afraid Osborn might make. I heard Jimmy breathe in a horrified whisper: "Ain't that rotten?" I saw he was face to face with something he couldn't understand. I looked at him sadly.

"I've been expecting something like this," I told him.

"Gee!" he exclaimed.

I saw that at that moment I had some of the prestige in his mind that I used to have when mothers meant infallibility.

I suppose the conversation we overheard put Osborn and Miss Fairweather and their affairs in an entirely new light. It had probably never occurred to Jimmy that Miss Fairweather was anything but humbly grateful for Osborn's attention. From Jimmy's point of view it was condescension without measure for his brother to have anything to say to her at all, and it now dawned on his bewildered brain that Miss Fairweather had not felt flattered, and had "shaken" Osborn in the most cold-blooded way.

"She holds her racket 's if she was shooin' off June bugs!" Jimmy now muttered, as if that gave a last intolerable touch to the business.

He had always known that girls were no use. He had learned that heroes are but men, and men are not to be depended on. Now he discovered that girls are false as well as useless.

I am destined always to listen to some meaningless chatter when my heart is fullest of my boys. Writing of it now, I give Jimmy the largest place because I believe the whole affair left more trace on him. At the time my heart was wrung for Osborn, and for a few moments I hated Miss Fairweather more than I hope ever again to hate any one. She had hurt my boy just to feed her vanity and to pass the time while she was waiting for the man she was engaged to. For the worst of it (or, perhaps, the best—who knows?) was that Osborn really cared—there was a radiance about him that showed how wonderful it all was to him. And while she filled his days, and, I suppose, his thoughts, I don't imagine he even in his innocence told himself he was "in love." Boys are blessedly ignorant about the working of their own hearts, and a natural boy often has to be told he's in love before he knows what has happened to him.

So I sat thinking of these things, while my sister Maria rambled on about the gallons of ice-cream and the bushels of strawberries that were sold. The little noises of the house said nothing to her, though they told me that Osborn had come home, and that Jimmy was roaming about the house, and that Edith had not got home. I was glad of that.

If one might be alone when one wanted to think and might meet grief always where there were no curious eyes to look at us, life would be easier.

But as my sister rocked back, her incurious eyes rested on my face, which I tried to keep from looking anxious, while my attention was strained to the breaking point. At last Jimmy came down-stairs, and wandered aimlessly into the room. He pretended to look for a book; he upset a pile of papers, his furtive eyes avoiding mine. I pretended not to notice. I knew he had something he wanted to say to me, but if I spoke to him he'd not have the

courage. How hard it is to keep still and not help! My sister broke the silence with a "Mercy me!" (She had settled down to her evening *solitaire*.) "What ails the boy? One would think he had St. Vitus' dance!" which sent him into the hall, and I saw his round, tanned face was as nearly pale as I had ever seen it, and drawn. He signed to me to come, but in what was the bare whisper of a gesture.

I arose at once and went out in my most deliberate way, as if I were going to get something and knew exactly where it was.

I followed Jimmy to the piazza, for we both instinctively went where no one could hear us. Then Jimmy muttered:

"Bite's feeling bum. He's sort of knocked out." He was loyal to the last, you see, though what he had to tell me next nearly choked him. He could hardly get the words out.

"He says he won't play ball to-morrow!"

It may very well be that you don't understand what it means for the captain of a ball-nine to be a "quitter." It's the loss of honor in the eyes of his fellows, no less. It's like a general saying that for all he cares, the battle may go on without him. It's the kind of thing that a boy doesn't do, and Jimmy, while he loyally excused his brother to me with the story that Osborn was feeling "bum," condemned him. I knew, too, that he had turned to me as a last resort to save Osborn.

I put my hand on his little hot head and pushed back his mop of hair. There was no one around, so I allowed myself the liberty.

"Don't you worry," I said. "I think Bite'll play, all right."

Then I went up-stairs to my son Osborn.

We have all had in our lives our moments of quivering humiliation, our cowardly moments, when we are abject in the abasement of pain. There is no one, I imagine, who can say that there has never been a moment in his whole life when pain was the stronger. So

I cannot blame Osborn for going to pieces at first.

He had no poses to help him, for a pose of heroism helps one in the hour of need, and poor Osborn had no more pose than a maple-tree.

Perhaps you think that I've done too much fine writing about a boy of seventeen, whose calf-love has come to an abrupt end—wait until your son has been made to suffer through the vanity of a girl!

I found him sitting by his window holding his head in his hands, and he looked up at me with I know not what dumb hurt look in his eyes. When you see your boy suffering, you forget for the moment that he is only seventeen, and that it will soon pass, and that you can be comforted, for he never will suffer in just that blind way ever again.

"Osborn," I said, "we have all in our family had the courage of pride," and at my word I think he sat straighter in his chair.

We sat together a long time. What I said to him I can't tell you; for in the moments we feel very deeply we say little that sounds significant. I may have told him broken bits of things that I had lived through, and gotten over, and all but forgotten. Perhaps that is why we go through things in our youth that seem so needless when we are older, that we may better help our children when their turn comes.

So Osborn's moment passed, and he played "great ball" the next day, so I'm told.

Since then Jimmy has looked on me with more respect than he has had for me since he discovered how inferior are women to his own glorious sex. It was Jimmy, after all, who most definitely added to his sum of knowledge. Osborn took his disappointment simply, as he takes everything, and went to playing ball as hard as ever. But I suspect Jimmy of knowing that the world is vanity. He has now his sarcastic moments. He has learned too many things in too short a time. I think he has been a little disappointed that Osborn has not been more blighted. He had a tendency at first to treat his

brother as if he were something fragile, as if he had recovered from a great illness. If one's hero must fall, let his fall shake the hills, let him be wounded and broken, for only a great emotion could excuse in his mind his hero's weakness.

But it isn't in Osborn to play the part of blighted being or anything he doesn't feel. A few weeks after the tragedy, Osborn demanded:

"Say, Ede, why don't you have Sara Evans around here oftener? That girl's

a dead-game sport! She plays an out-o'-sight game of golf!"

Sara is not yet sixteen, a pretty tom-boy with the manners of a baby—not at all the kind of girl I should think Osborn would fancy.

Slowly Jimmy let his eyes travel along the table until they rested on mine, and then came into them an indescribable look of amused contempt.

He had learned before that heroes are human and women faithless. Now he learned that men are fickle.



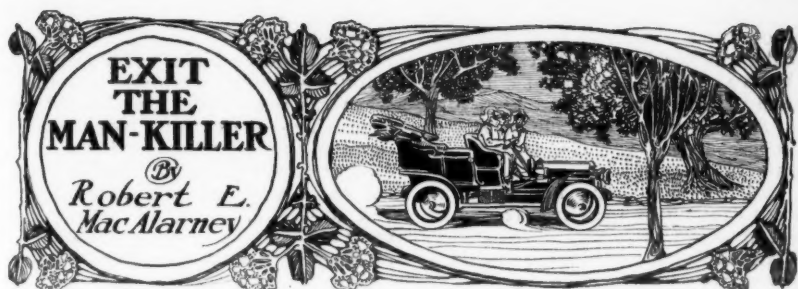
THE SINGER

BEFORE Love came, through dreamful nights and days,
 I sang the wonder of my heart's desire—
 Woven of bird-songs and of blossomed ways
 Where joyous poppies flaunt their gay attire;
 Of rippling brooks, whose gold and chrysoprase
 Give back the beauty of the sunset's fire;
 And piping winds, that in the twilight raise
 The ancient music of some wood-god's lyre.

When Love was here I could not find a word
 To meet the wistful question in his eyes,
 Though quick within my heart his pleading stirred
 A myriad songs to make him glad replies;
 Yet, since my lips were mute, no note he heard
 Of all my music; and, in grieved surprise,
 With mournful smile from which the joy was blurred,
 He turned away—to leave me sorrow-wise.

After Love went, my songs found voice again.
 Though all the notes that were the loveliest
 Were born of days of loneliness and pain,
 And nights when fear lay sheltered in my breast;
 My birds were still, my blossoms drenched with rain,
 My brooks and breezes could no joy protest;
 Yet grief lent magic to each haunting strain,
 And after Love had gone I sang him best!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



ONTY CATHCART watched the gallery streaming in return across the links. It had been championship day at the Carrollton Country Club, and now the final was over.

Somewhere, in the rear of the slowly moving ribbon of women in cool linen and their complement of flanneled escort, were his wife and Enid Morrow. Well, they had played it off by now. And it remained to be seen if a second close match between title-holder and runner-up would leave diplomatic relations between Nora Cathcart and her best friend unstrained.

This morning the title-holder's husband had sat at one end of the clubhouse porch, pulling abstractedly at a Scotch-and-soda, quite alone and behind a craftily constructed barricade of bent-wood chairs. In another ten minutes he would meet his wife upon the lawn, encountering the pain or pleasure of her eye, and feeling monumentally clumsy whether the cup was hers or no.

Monty did not know why, but he always felt clumsy when he watched his wife doing things in public—she did them so very well. And he imagined she must be creating resentment because of it. Only while treading the deck of his steam-yacht, the *Banshee*, did he feel on equal terms. Here, to be sure, he had a well-defined advantage, for Nora Cathcart was a poor sailor, making no pretense of paralleling her golf form upon salt water. She fan-

cied, too, the bulk of her easy-going husband most when clothed in blue and duck. If he had only known how small and inefficient she felt when the *Banshee* was heeling in a Long Island Sound gale—like many of her sister craft, the *Banshee* sacrificed stability to speed—Monty Cathcart, perhaps, might have made intelligent use of the revelation. Not that he did not possess quite all of his wife's affection. He did—absolutely—and, in a misty sort of way, he was confident of this. But, as Percy Winslow was in the habit of remarking, Nora Cathcart made Monty "fag too much in the open."

The curling human ribbon wound nearer, and the Scotch-and-soda was now only an icy shallow. Cathcart was nerving himself to the point of a descent from his coign of placid observation when there was a hum and a clanking rattle upon the driveway, and a huge black touring-car locked to a standstill within shelter of the portecochère. From the steering-seat leaped a sunburned young man, who tossed a dust-coat to his chauffeur and ran up the steps with a grin.

"Isn't the agony over yet, Monty?" he cried. "Judging by the returning multitude, I should say that it was. I did my prettiest to make the run from town in time to watch Enid and Nora face to face at the last ditch." He turned to his man. "Take the car to the sheds," he ordered. "Have it here in an hour and a half."

Monty Cathcart was eying the other with a troubled frown. "Brock Haver-ton," he said. "You have a cheek."

"Does my lightsomeness ride roughly over the meditations of the titleholder's better half?" jibed Haverton. "You've been amending history, Monty. For here we find that, after all, Antony tarried at home to practise disconsolateness while Cleopatra was in the field—with a brassy."

Cathcart's gaze gave no hint of rising to the fly of jocosity. It was intent upon the vanishing motor.

"Brock, you *have* a cheek, now, haven't you?" he repeated.

"Oh!" exclaimed Haverton, almost guiltily. "So you've recognized it! I thought that maybe the new coat—"

"You're a clumsy prevaricator," interrupted the other. "You know it's mere kindergarten babble to refer to the Man-Killer as 'it.'"

"For the Lord's sake, Monty! can't you let bygones be bygones?" rasped Haverton. "What's the use of raking over a shady past? Many a man has lived down a crooked reputation. Why can't a motor do the same?"

"A motor can," replied Cathcart solemnly. "But not a motor devil. The Man-Killer is a demon. There never was a more real one. He'd have been a find for the Aztecs in Montezuma's day. They'd have chucked the Huitzl dynasty of divinity and planted that murderous maroon machine on top of a specially constructed teocalli."

"Your erudition astounds me," remarked his friend. "And how surprised old Bill Cortez and the rest of the visiting Spanish team would have been to have encountered an auto da fé on foreign soil."

"Good God, Brock! don't add the insult of a silly pun to your folly," cried Cathcart.

The gallery groups were nearer now, and he lowered his voice almost to a whisper. "Just because you are a motor maniac is no reason why you should have flaunted in all of our faces an indecent purchase from the Carstairs executor's sale. You heard what I said—'all of our faces.' That means Nora and me—and—"

"Go on, Monty. Don't show the quitter streak. The yellow peril will

be upon us in another moment. You mean—Enid."

"Yes, I mean Enid," said Cathcart. "You can guess what she will think when she knows you have bought the Man-Killer—the car that took the lives of poor Billy Carstairs and his bride, after trying to do murder a dozen times before. It was maroon then, to be sure. But do you fancy you are going to deceive any one by painting it black?—a gruesomely appropriate hue, by the same token."

Brockholst Haverton's brow clouded. He turned, looking toward the brigade of linen and flannel, moving upon the piazza. Plainly visible to Monty, who, however, gave no sign of recognition, were Nora Cathcart and Enid Morrow, arm in arm, and chatting gaily.

"Is every one going to play the fool after taking your cue, Monty?" he asked. "I suppose there's no helping it. But I'm past the silly undergraduate period, and, to be frank, I don't care a button for all this sentimental twaddle."

"Lie number one," Cathcart interposed. "You do care—care a lot."

"I've got the Man-Killer, and, be it motor or devil, I'll tame it from tire to tonneau. I'll do it, Monty, or may I be damned."

"Brock, you know what's going to happen better than I can tell you. That's the pity of it. That's the reason it's useless for me to say anything."

The sunburned one winced. "Hang it all, Monty," he grumbled. "Let the women rage and the heathen imagine vain things. But for the sake of you and me—just you and me—let the rest slide. Don't force the Man-Killer to slaughter an old friendship that has never a scar to show for its ten years of existence. You sail a boat, old man. And I've seen you ride out a gale when you could have scuttled for shelter early in the game—when Nora was a bit weepy and begged you to cut and run for it. Yes, you've done just that, Monty. Don't swagger it out. *Why* did you do it? Because you wished to show the *Banshee*, and the Sound, and your wife, and yourself that you could

fight out and win handily in the end. Well, that's the reason I've bought Billy Carstairs' machine. Yours is yachts. Mine is motors. Every one had been talking so much rot about that deadly maroon car, that I went to see it out of pure curiosity. If you knew anything about automobiles, Monty, you'd know what was the inevitable result. I fell in love with it. I just had to have it. They were glad to sell, for Dirck Walton and the rest of the racing crowd had passed it up. I happened to know the auctioneer, though, and he tried to do what he imagined was the decent thing by quietly tipping me off that this was the machine that had done a double murder. What would you have done had it been a salt-water proposition? You know, and so do I. And here I am pretty nearly an outlawed motor-tamer, although the Man-Killer has shown only the disposition of a gasoline angel in the forty-eight hours I've been his lord and master. Do you understand, old fellow? Don't you?"

Cathcart's shoulders moved. Even within sound of his wife's laughter he was absorbed by the problem of the moment. "I'm not sure that I do, Brock," he answered. "You see, there's still something that, apparently, you don't know about that machine. Only a man with a wife to repeat women's chatter would know. But I'll trust you to take no insane chances. I'll go that far."

"Good old boy," muttered Haverton. "And now, Antony, rise and greet Cleopatra. Reckoning from certain signs and omens, I should say her brassy had been all conquering."

At the steps' bottom Mrs. Cathcart was holding an enforced court of congratulation.

"Take me away, Monty. Do take me away," she cried, as she saw her husband's shoulders cleave a path through the group.

"Ahoy there, the *Banshee*!" It was Rawlins Richardson's bantering tone. "Cut out the prize-ship, Monty, and I'll look after the convoy."

"Not if we know it, Rick," said Haverton, skilfully maneuvering Enid

Morrow out of the crush. "It is I, the original and only first-aid-to-injured golfers, that shall administer comfort. My ambulance kit is waiting in the grill-room. And Murdoch says there's room for only four—Rick—room for only four."

"Monty," whispered Nora Cathcart as they entered the club-house, "I'm a done champion. My crown has turned to battered pewter."

"What do you mean, Nora?" asked her husband. "You won, didn't you? You always do win."

"I won," replied his wife. "Oh, yes, I won, but only by a stroke, and a prodigiously lucky stroke, my dear. Enid is too much for me. Somehow I've felt that ever since the rub on the last green time before this. So take one last look at the present Carrollton cup-holder, for she doesn't intend to enter next year."

"Never you mind, Nora," said Cathcart soothingly. He was staring at his wife as if he did not comprehend. "You'll feel better next spring. You're overgolfed, that's all."

"Maybe, Monty; but, also, maybe not. And I've often heard you say it was the square thing to face defeat in advance if you knew it was inevitably en route. But now, since we're safely stowed away at the corner window-table that Enid and I dreamed of during those last four holes, do order something substantial to eat."

"Let me echo Nora's entreaty," said the girl opposite. "Appetite is here to allay the fever of combat. I can answer for the defeated. She would suggest that Murdoch be asked to bring at least one portion of that crab-meat au gratin. I think it might begin to console me. Don't I look tearful, Brockholst?"

"Dearest of foes," exclaimed Mrs. Cathcart, reaching over the linen and giving one browned hand of the girl an impulsive squeeze, "you're my master at the game now—you've arrived, and you know it. Two years of reign o' the greens is enough for poor Queen Nora. Down with the Cathcart régime and up with the Morrow blazon. Do

you fag for the new sovereign or quit court with the 'has beens,' Brock?"

"Leading question, Nora. I'm a true courtier, and I want to see the wind actually blow the straw before I follow."

"What rabble these unattached persons are," Enid," said Mrs. Cathcart. "But I'm through. I'd be worn to a gossamer wisp trying to keep my ill-fitting laurels for another season. Wait for me next May, Enid. I'll be a leader in the gallery I used to loathe, and I'll double-cross the fingers of both hands every time that foolish little Kitty Munworth makes a drive. She'll be your only stumbling-block."

"Encore!" remarked Haverton, looking up from penciling an order. "It takes a woman to honestly fraternize with an enemy; eh, Monty?"

"It do," said the skipper of the *Banshee*. "A woman is only a woman, you know, and a good ha-ha is a joke."

"Our Monty transmuting eighteen-karat Kipling into scrap-iron," cried Enid. "For shame!"

"And fie," added Haverton.

"It's one of the few prerogatives we possess," declared Mrs. Cathcart. "Some day it will be different, of course. But, to-day, marriage——"

"I hate to interrupt, Nora," said her husband remorselessly, "but there is real food at last."

They lingered over the copper coffee-machine, watching the laughing groups at the other tables. Carrollton Club was at its best on Women's Championship Day. There was scarcely a person in the room whom the four at the window-table did not know. A score of times some one leaned over Mrs. Cathcart's chair to congratulate her upon a second victory and wish Enid Morrow better luck next time. The two women had been inseparable since girlhood, but even their intimates had been a trifle eager to observe how the pair would weather a repetition of championship rivalry.

Mrs. Cathcart knew this; Enid knew it; Monty and Haverton were keenly alive to the unexpressed curiosity. And, secretly, each was amused by the

reconnoitering glances despatched in their direction.

"We're driving home in the brake. Come along and have tea at 'Bend o' the Road,'" said Mrs. Cathcart to Haverton after the liqueurs.

"Sorry, but I sha'n't be able," was the reply. "I've promised to motor out to the Braxtons' for bridge. There'll be just time enough to get into town and my dinner clothes. My man is probably waiting for me now."

Rawlins Richardson strolled by on his way to the veranda. He laid a hand upon Haverton's shoulder. "So you've gone and done it, Brock," he said. "Every one's chattering about it, and making bets as to how many weeks will elapse before it gets you, too."

Cathcart's forehead wrinkled, and Haverton fumed inwardly at the clumsiness of the revelation.

"Done what, Rick?" demanded Nora Cathcart. Her husband's warning glance had come too late.

"I thought Brock had told you, of course," said Richardson.

"You've hardly given me time," snapped Haverton. "I'll tell them now. I bought Billy Carstairs' motor yesterday."

"Billy Carstairs' car—the one that——" Enid Morrow was sitting very upright.

"You don't mean the Man-Killer?" asked Mrs. Cathcart.

"Yes, I've bought the Man-Killer." Haverton was looking at the girl opposite. There was a quickly flaming anger in her eyes. He felt it now, although their gaze was leveled over his head.

"You couldn't help recognizing the machine even under the new paint," Rawlins Richardson continued, calmly ignorant of the havoc he had created. "Percy Winslow says you'll have to rechristen it—the 'Black Death,' or something appropriate to the new color scheme. She's a beauty, though; I'll say that for her. Now, I'm doomed to going home in Percy's electric run-about. He's got an easy-going car, has Percy. Trust him for keeping on the safe side of things. Wish you luck,

Brock, with the Killer, but if I told you what I really believed you ought to do, I'd say run it into the river and let it stay."

It was Mrs. Cathcart, who broke the silence after Richardson had taken his departure, innocent of having spoiled a very delightful luncheon for four, including the Carrollton championship runner-up.

"Brock!" she exclaimed, "Rick's indulging in some of his stupid jesting. You surely haven't done anything as really raw as buying Billy Carstairs' motor, the car that killed him and Rita? You aren't going to plead guilty to anything like that?"

The man marked the earnestness in her look and tone, and marked, too, that now the gaze of the younger woman was intent upon him. It contained more than a modicum of horror; it revealed almost a fighting down of actual loathing, and stung him more deeply than he dared contemplate. So he threw back his shoulders and faced the three determinedly.

"Look here," he said. "Ever since I set foot on the club-house porch today, either Monty or some one else has been busy trying to make me feel like a social leper, who ought to go off in his infected auto in search of a nice little Molokai of his own. What is it all about? Before tramping upon the poor worm, please indicate exact reason."

"Come, Brock," interposed Cathcart. "Can't you see that you've been running your stubborn head against the stone wall of a woman's sentiment?"

"I should call it a more primary geologic formation," said Enid Morrow slowly. The younger man felt the almost frozen crackle of her words. And, feeling it, the rest of the crowded grill-room suddenly seemed very unreal and far off. There were only the three and himself, while, dominating this little world of one round table, was a slim girl of twenty-two, bareheaded, with soft hair still betraying the gentle disarrangement of the game she had been so sturdily playing. Her brown eyes, from which all warmth had vanished,

were fixed upon him as they might have been upon a rude groom, caught in a deliberate bit of stable bad manners.

"I agree with you, Enid. I should call it the barricade of decent self-respect." Mrs. Cathcart was blind to the flag of her husband's frowning. She divided equally with her fellow the shocked horror of the moment. And when Nora Cathcart was in earnest she minced no matter.

Haverton noticed and smiled grimly at Cathcart's effort to spare him further attack. Then he returned to the charge. "You can't decide a matter like this intolerantly, Nora," he said. "How does the indecency of it come in? One doesn't hesitate to occupy hotel rooms where probably scores of persons have died. I saw you invade the ransacked tomb of a Rameses last summer with a laugh, and you stared at a whole flotilla of occupied mummy cases in Cairo with the utmost interest. You'd buy a dead man's yacht, Monty, and no one would think you sacrilegious if you renamed the craft with a champagne supper and some of Percy Winslow's jokes of equally heady vintage."

"That's entirely different, Brock," snapped Mrs. Cathcart. "You're far afield."

"Altogether different," agreed the girl. "Rita's and Billy's deaths are inseparably linked to that motor. Billy took her away in it from the little Long Island church the day they were married. It was a vicious car even then, although it hadn't been on this side of the water long. Every one said it was a beautiful machine, but cranky. It was Billy who was mad then; motor mad and love mad at the same time. He would take his wedding-journey in the maroon touring-car. And he wouldn't take the Frenchman who'd been handling it in the speed trials at Ormonde. Billy said chauffeurs had no standing as a bridal auto crew." The girl was panting as she finished, and her eyes were moist.

"Gad! it all seems like yesterday," said Cathcart. "Remember what a bully day it was? The lawn at St. Botolph's was packed with motors, and

there were a dozen pink coats from the Harriers to give the pair a galloping view-halloo for the first quarter-mile after the dominie had done."

"And so—they were married," said Nora Cathcart, with a queer little choke. She stood up, and the others followed. Upon the porch the three waited while Cathcart telephoned to the stables for the brake. His wife put her arm around the girl as they leaned against a vined pillar. "Please don't misinterpret, Brock," she said. "Only it cut me up to have to realize you'd done something—something that hurt. And what hurt as much as anything else was your not guessing that we'd be cut up about it."

"I know, Nora. It makes you feel that I've been brutal. Perhaps I have been. But, honestly, I never gave the thing a thought as being queer. There isn't any use in pretending that I did. Until I saw Monty this afternoon, and realized, from what he said, that you and Enid would feel badly, it never crossed my mind that any one's eyebrows would go up." Haverton was talking in a puzzled fashion.

Mrs. Cathcart's arm tightened about Enid. "Give the car back," she cried. "Why, think of it, Brock! You can't go on motoring with the ghosts of Billy and Rita for companions. Every time you sit in that machine you'll know that they are beside you."

"What do you say, Enid?" Haverton's face was eager.

"I haven't anything to say, Brockholst. I suppose that such things are really only matters of taste. I'm just disappointed, that's all. If I was a trifle spectacular at luncheon, you'll have to forgive me."

The colorlessness of her words angered him. "I expected you to be frank, at least," he said. "Listen, Nora. It rests with Enid whether the Man-Killer stays in commission. Remember, I don't feel yet that I've done anything wrong. But I say to Enid right now, that if she gives the word of command, the car may rust in garage forever as far as I am concerned."

The girl gently freed herself from

Mrs. Cathcart's touch. "Here comes Monty," she whispered. "It's been a very nice championship day, but I feel just the least bit tired."

Two miles out from the Carrollton Club the Cathcart brake was passed from behind by a snorting motor. It vanished in a swirling screen of dust, but not before the brake occupants had recognized the Man-Killer, and had caught the goggled nod of Haverton, who was alone.

"There will be three ghosts haunting that tonneau one of these days," sighed Mrs. Cathcart.

"Couldn't you have let him down a trifle more easily?" said Monty.

"Ask Enid."

"I will beat you for the title next year if this badgering isn't ended," the girl replied. "If Brockholst Haverton is bent upon becoming a spirit chauffeur, I'm sure I am not the one to interfere, or to wish him materialized afterward, either."

"Somehow, Nora," confided Cathcart to his wife as he was slipping into his dinner jacket that evening, "we've made hash of this day, even though you have won a second championship."

Mrs. Cathcart touched her lord and master's arm remorsefully.

"Look at me, Monty," she commanded. "Who has been teaching you the subtle art of divination? Lo! you have spoken truth. We have not only made hash, but a very brown hash of things. Enid is up-stairs, pleading a sick headache to avoid coming down to dinner. In reality she is crying, and not because of a lost championship, either. As for Brock, at this moment he's tempting fate and the Man-Killer sorely somewhere, you may be sure."

"I pity him if he crashes into that primary geologic formation you warned him of." There was a twinkle in Monty Cathcart's eyes, but his wife was too earnest to perceive it.

"That was Enid's simile, not mine," she exclaimed, almost indignantly. "I was simply frank with him, just as I should have been with a brother."

"Exactly," remarked her husband,

upon the threshold. "But there are sisters and sisters—and—you say Enid is not coming down to dinner?"

It was the second week in August, and they were at breakfast in the Cathcart bungalow—Mrs. Cathcart, Enid Morrow, Percy Winslow, and Mrs. Stacey. Nora hated the Adirondacks unless fortified against loneliness by a house full. This given, she professed a more than normal amount of affection for the mountains and the little lake of which Monty Cathcart was so proud; five miles of shore-line, and all of it preserved. Even now she was reading a letter from him, written in town two days before—it was a thirty-mile drive from Tanner's to camp, and the rural free delivery was somewhat uncertain.

"Monty says Rick and the Murrays can't possibly get here before the twentieth," she announced.

"I've evolved more weighty news than that," said Percy Winslow, looking up from a newspaper. "I hold in my hand an ancient sporting page—you must buck up your mail man, Nora. And I see that the Mineola road race was won by Brock Haverton, cracking the record. Let me see—a fifty-horsepower Fernieux—gad! it was the Man-Killer. Well, I give Brock credit for taming the spirit of that bucking devil motor."

"The Man-Killer. I'm sick of the mere mention of that car," said Mrs. Cathcart. "I thought Monty was, too. And yet he writes that he has asked Brockholst Haverton up to camp, and that they're going to make the trip by automobile. They'll reach Albany the first day, spend the night there, and try to get to the lake by supper-time."

"I thought better of Monty," exclaimed Enid Morrow. "I fancied he had more reverence for the gods of the woods. An automobile in our little Adirondack preserve! Why, Nora, it is as much out of place as a trolley-car."

"And a deal more useless," agreed Percy Winslow. "If we had a few private trolley-cars we might get the

boats over those confounded carries without skinning our shoulders."

"What I cannot understand," murmured Nora Cathcart, "is how Monty persuaded Brock to come."

"What I'd like to know is how they ever expect to climb Three-Mile Hill in an auto," said Mrs. Stacey.

"Altogether it will be an interesting experiment," added Enid Morrow.

"Really, do you mean that?" asked her hostess.

"Of course I do," replied the girl.

The bungalow dwellers were expectant three days later, when the distant call of an automobile siren warned them of the Man-Killer's approach. The uncanny reverberations echoed across the lake, rolling off among the hills and then over Elephant Mountain's lumbering length.

"If I were a deer," began Percy Winslow. "If I were a deer, I remarked."

"If you must have an answer, Percy, you are not a deer," said Mrs. Stacey, who, wrapped in a Navajo blanket, was perched upon the white birch railing, where she could command the approach from the lake turn.

"So be it," sighed Winslow. "But if I were, I should collect all the toughest old bucks of my herd to lie in wait for the Man-Killer and his barbarian crew at the brook. And, then and there, I'd splinter antler with right good-will against running-gear that is forever outlawed in Sherwood Forest."

"How could any self-respecting buck endure a whiff of gasoline?" asked Enid Morrow, who, with Mrs. Cathcart, stood near Mrs. Stacey.

"That minds me to ask where in time does Brock expect to get his gasoline up here?"

"Percy, you are positively irritating," Mrs. Stacey groaned. "How do you suppose the guide runs our launch?"

"I forgive you your cruelty, Diana. Ha! They come! Ahoy there, the Man-Killer!"

And, truly, strangely out of key with the picture of lake and clean mountain green, came a rushing motor; a huge,

black hulk, that shot with a tremendous puffing up the corduroy roadway, thudding from log to log. The car held two dust-covered men, hideous in tan coats and masking eye-guards.

"Ladies and gentlemen," shouted Percy Winslow, pirouetting in front of the machine, "let me call your attention to our latest scenic effect—Mephisto & Co. entering paradise."

"Monty, how could you?" asked Mrs. Cathcart, as her husband shed his outer signs of travel-stain. "I've been shuddering ever since I knew you were at the mercy of that car."

"I'm very glad you came, Brockholst," Enid Morrow was telling the alighted chauffeur, who stood before her, hiding his smoldering delight at the beauty of this girlish vision.

"It's the roughest work I ever had cut out for me," he replied. "Just look at the scratches. We punctured a tire, too, near Tanner's. But the running-gear is as sound as when we left New York, even with all the steeplechasing over your corduroy paths."

"You don't belong here, Brock," said Mrs. Stacey. "This is Arcadia. Why have you imported a dragon to scare our gentle fawns?"

"How dare you call Enid a gentle fawn," chirrup Winslow, who had come from an examination of the car. "I won't have it. Enid may be a fawn, but she is not gentle. Brock, as a tire-mender, you are a success. It hasn't leaked a bit."

For a whole week life at the Cathcart bungalow was serene, but upon the eighth day Nora sought her husband with a troubled expression.

"It's Brock and Enid," she explained. "They've been quarreling again."

"What for, this time?" asked Monty, who was overhauling some fishing-tackle and averse to theorizing at the moment.

"Don't ask me," replied his wife. "I merely thought I'd better warn you. You may be able to keep Percy Winslow in subjection. He will notice things first, and he will not refrain from making speeches that he regards as funny."

Not since its arrival had the black car been out of the stable-shed where Haverton had trundled it after greeting the porchful. A dozen times he had been upon the point of asking the girl to test the mettle of the Man-Killer, but something had kept him from putting the request into words. From that afternoon at the Carrollton Country Club had dated a strange mood of uncertainty with regard to Enid Morrow. Before, he had believed that when he should reveal to her what meant most to him he might not be without some hope of success. But there was with him now a continual memory of the almost loathing in her look, born of the moment when she learned that he had bought the car that had killed Billy Carstairs and his bride.

Nora Cathcart was wrong. They had not quarreled. They had simply come to an understanding of misunderstanding. Haverton had taken the girl canoeing to Indian Bay, and they had traversed the short trail to Fawn Lake to hear the singing-trees, a clump of maples which the slightest breeze set chafing until it seemed as if giant fingers were sweeping living strings in a wild Indian jumble of chords.

He asked Enid Morrow to marry him, with the sound of the singing-trees woven through his request. She turned to him frankly. "I couldn't, Brockholst," she said. "I couldn't, and if you only knew how sorry I am. There was a time when, if you had asked me, I should have given you a different answer."

"Before that luncheon on Women's Championship Day?"

"Yes, before that afternoon."

"Then the Man-Killer killed my chance of having you care for me?"

"It isn't exactly that," replied the girl. "It is hard for even me to understand. But, somehow, that day I grew uncertain—uncertain of how we should reconcile the situation when we felt very differently about vital things. It shocked me when you bought a motor-car that had killed two of our best friends. But I think it shocked me even more that you hadn't asked me about

it; hadn't even told me that you were going to do it. Of course, all that isn't logical, for there was no reason why you should have told me."

"But I did tell you, with Nora listening, that if you said the word, I'd put the Man-Killer out of commission."

"I know you did, Brock. But the damage was done then. Hear the trees. They do that when there's only a breath stirring. My heart sings just such a jumbled lot of chords. I've heard them ever since you rolled up to the bungalow with Monty. And I've wanted so to score them properly, but I can't."

"Is that all, Enid?"

"Brock, I'm afraid that's all. If you don't mind, I'd like to paddle back."

Cathcart was smoking on the porch after supper when he saw Haverton approaching, a book in his hand.

"Monty, I've looted your book-shelves for a volume of Browning," said the latter. "I'd like to mutilate it, too, if you've no objection."

"Go ahead, with all the pleasure in the world," consented the skipper of the *Banshee*. "It's poetry, but that's all I know about Browning. Nora's the only one who ever opens those books. But if you're looking for wrapping-paper —"

"I'm not," said Haverton. "I want to send Enid Morrow an invitation to go motoring to-morrow."

"There's camp note-paper in the desk."

"That won't do. I want a particular sheet;" and Haverton ripped a leaf out of the volume and strode away.

"He tore a page out of a book, Nora," Mrs. Cathcart's husband informed her before retiring. "Just ripped a sheet out of a book of verse; Browning, I think he told me it was. He said he wanted to ask Enid to go riding in the Man-Killer to-morrow."

Nora Cathcart slipped away from her astonished mate and returned, bearing the book that Cathcart had seen Haverton deface. Running through it rapidly, she paused and nodded. "I guessed it," she said. "That means she has said 'no' once and for all."

"What did he tear out?" asked Monty.

"You haven't the soul of a poet, my dear, for which I thank Heaven; and, besides, you don't know 'The Last Ride.'" With this answer Cathcart had to be content.

Upstairs at her window, overlooking the lake, Enid Morrow was reading a torn scrap of printing, by candle-light.

Take back the hope you gave—I claim
Only a memory of the same—
And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

She blew out the candle and watched the dark penciling of the pines. There was the call of a loon from far off across the water. In the dancing strip of moonlight which paved the way to Indian Bay, she saw, now and then, a black speck, which she fancied might be the bird; then she laughed at herself for the fancy.

"That was in tune, Brock," she whispered to the night, fingering the paper. "That may be the beginning of harmony again. Who knows? Perhaps, after all, you and I may orchestrate the melody of those singing maples."

"She'll think I'm a lunatic," mused Haverton ere he slept. "Cutting Browning to fit an automobile was cheap. But I'm going home day after to-morrow, and it was my only chance."

The others gathered upon the porch to see them sally forth. "Treat Arcadia tenderly," called Mrs. Stacey, as the car grunted into motion.

"Remember the gentle fawn," advised Percy Winslow.

Nora Cathcart said nothing. But when the motor had racketed down the driveway and around the lake turn, she went into the living-room. Monty Cathcart found her there ten minutes afterward, the rifled volume of Browning in her lap and a queer expression in her eyes.

"What a materialist you are, you and Percy Winslow," she said. "You're going fishing when you could be meditating upon real tragedy, the kind you'd buy orchestra chairs to see, if you were in New York. And it's happening here

under your very eyes for nothing. You never sent *me* cut-out pieces of verse. You never said, 'Your leave for one more last ride with me.'"

Cathcart nodded good-humoredly. "It's plain to see that Brock has been reinstated into the ancient and honorable order of self-respecting folk," he said. "I hope he's making the same sort of a hit with Enid. It'll save my library."

Sun glory gilded the mountain paths for the Man-Killer's valedictory run. Haverton knew the car as a musician knows his instrument. He motored with expression even upon corduroy. The combination of the presence of the woman he loved, the pulse-quickening air, and realization that he was the master of this once surly devil-in-the-machine, elated him. He felt more than ever the almost human element of the car. He found the Man-Killer avoiding obstacles, jockeying over bad bits of mountain road, quite as if there had been no hand at the steering-wheel. He tried to explain to the girl how he felt.

"I used to believe that horses had a soul," he laughed; "and since I've become motor-mad, I'm beginning to believe there must be a heaven for automobiles, too."

"A heaven for the good motors," Enid Morrow corrected.

"Do they still talk of the Man-Killer as a lost soul?" he asked.

They had climbed better than even he had fancied they could. Three-Mile Hill was passed, and before them stretched a narrow thread of faint wagon-tracks, made by the log-carts in the spring. The trees arched almost to the point of closing across the roadway. Now and then, to the right where the foliage was thinned, was a glimpse of the brawling Sacandaga, rushing over boulders and through an impotent barricade of water-worn limbs, flooring a gash in the mountainside fully a hundred feet beneath. Haverton looked well to his steering then, for a second of skidding tire would mean danger.

"This is no place for a motor," he said, turning to the girl, whose eyes were dancing with the excitement of the

climb. "We'll wheel when we come to a spot that will give us room."

"Look!" She pointed ahead. He saw the bushes quivering where a young buck had leaped into the road. The animal stood erect, eying the approaching car as if spellbound by fear. Then, with a whirl, it was off, plunging straight ahead, a comical mingling of bobbing haunch and antler.

"Chase him, Brock! I've never seen a wild deer so close before." The girl was thrilling with an unsuspected spirit of the hunt, and with a leap as sudden as the buck's, the Man-Killer was launched in pursuit.

He must have been a stout-hearted animal, indeed, to have kept hoof with that snorting being of strange shape hot upon its trail. It was gear-racking work. Man and girl were shaken like rag dolls in the wild passage over rut and rock, but they were gaining fast. Another fifty yards—

Wr-r-r-r! In the fraction of the second there was for realization, Haverton knew that at last the Man-Killer had thrown off the yoke. The time had come for a reversion to type. Just so had the front wheels wavered for Billy and Rita upon their fatal wedding-journey. A swerve to the right, straight for the thin tree-line that hedged the drop to the tumbling stream below. He saw the face of Enid Morrow as in a red mist. "Billy!" he shouted once, and then he forgot about things.

He was rather amazed, a full quarter-hour later, when, opening his eyes, he comprehended at a glance. "It was the Man-Killer," he said very distinctly. He repeated the remark, wiping away a trickle of blood from a cut upon the cheek. He was very ragged and very bruised. Then he recalled that he had had a passenger. Sure enough, she lay a few yards away, a crumpled heap of lavender linen frock. Going over, he turned the heap face upward. And, having done so, he swore earnestly. "Why, it's Enid Morrow!" he screamed. She was only stunned, he decided, for there were no wounds apparent, and her heart was beating sturdily.

Placing the girl in a sitting position against a tree, propped up by two of the car's scattered cushions, he walked to the rim of the mountain, where hung the Man-Killer, menacing even in its impotency. Nothing had checked its mad plunge into the valley but a jagged outcrop of granite, which had gripped the rear axle, pinching the driving-gear into wreckage.

"Hell!" he shouted, kicking childishly at the motor's scarred black sides. "You would, would you? You've been waiting for her. Your specialty is double murder, is it?"

From behind him came a cry. He wheeled quickly, startled by the strength in the girl's voice.

"Oh, you're awake!" he said, returning to the cushions. "And I called myself a motor-tamer, Enid. Monty was right about the Killer. His specialty is double murder. He's only been waiting for me to get you at his mercy."

"You're all mussed up, Brock," complained the girl, touching his cut cheek with trembling fingers. "But you're not hurt, are you?"

"Neither of us are much hurt, thank Heaven!" he replied, kneeling beside her, noticing that she did not draw away the hand he kissed, which, he somewhat unsteadily decided, meant that his chance had come back to him. He would see that it had come to stay.

"Just before we were going over you cried 'Billy,'" she whispered.

"I wanted you to know that what Nora said was true. You remember she told me that wherever I went I'd always feel that Billy's and Rita's ghosts were in the car. Well, Nora was wise. They have always been with me. I've never told any one before. I wouldn't tell you if the Man-Killer weren't dead. But since he is, you are going to marry me."

"It doesn't matter at all about the Man-Killer since this morning, Brock. I'd marry you, anyway." Enid Morrow's eyes held a great pity. "I've been unjust. I realized it all of a sudden when the car slipped and plunged for the edge. I think Rita must have felt it when she knew in that last second

that Billy's control of the car was gone. It was a feeling that I had wasted my opportunity for letting you understand I cared for you more than all the rest of things put together."

Haverton leaned down and kissed her upon the lips. "We'd better be starting for the lake," he said. "It will take us all of the afternoon to walk home. We're both a bit battered, you know."

"But the car?"

"Oh, yes, the car. I'd clean forgot the Man-Killer," he said. "They might patch him up again in New York. But he's convicted now under the law for habitual criminals. Even if there were a cripple's gait in him, I'd not trust him with you for a single yard. We walk back to the Cathcarts' this day. The Man-Killer has come to the end of his rope."

He led her to where the disabled machine hung, like a gigantic crushed beetle. He felt her shiver as she gazed at the sheer descent, bristling with stubby pines and balsams, floored by the foaming tumble of the mountain torrent.

"Exit the Man-Killer," he said. "A touch beneath that bent axle, and he'll journey to the river where he tried to take us."

"Poor old car." She touched the near wheel gently. "Remember, it was the Man-Killer that made us understand."

"Therefore he has served his purpose." He cut a sapling pole with his pocket-knife, and put its end beneath the rock-gripped axle.

"Wait!" cried the girl. She ran across the road, coming back with her arms full of the crimson of the mountain ash. Deftly she twisted the bloom in wheel and steering-gear. "Speak for the Man-Killer, Brock," she said.

"*Morituri te salutamus*," he recited.

"Hail, all hail and farewell!" They were both under the spell of the moment.

Then Haverton pried once, deeply, and, as if a human grasp were being unfastened, the car hesitated, lurched forward and slid downward, its wheels

revolving as if propelled by their original motive power. Somehow they were steered straight upon their sheer descent, mowing short the stunted balsams and sending rocks leaping upward, until, with a clamor that awakened the echoes of the valley, the motor dashed into the rocky river bed, hurling itself in one last, mighty effort, a shapeless mass of metal, clear of the current, into the merciful embrace of the green beyond. Then there was silence, until Enid Morrow spoke.

"It was like a real funeral," she sobbed. "I wish Billy and Rita knew."

"May Billy Carstairs' car rest in peace," said Haverton earnestly. And they set foot toward Three-Mile Hill.

It was long after dusk when they reached the bungalow. By the bobbing lanterns upon the lake they knew that Percy Winslow was engineering one of his canoeing sing-songs. They could even hear an occasional snatch of guitar-framed ditty.

"So much the better," said Haverton. "We'll be able to change our clothing without having to explain."

But Nora Cathcart rose from a wicker chair as they entered the living-room. She had been dozing by the fireplace. "Hello!" she exclaimed. "I must have been sleeping soundly not to

have heard the car. We waited supper as long as we dared, but Percy would have his canoe party. So I stayed to—look here, Brock!" She seized the girl almost angrily, drawing her into the lamplight. "What have you and the Man-Killer been doing to her?"

"There isn't any Man-Killer, Nora," whispered Enid.

"The Man-Killer is dead," said Haverton.

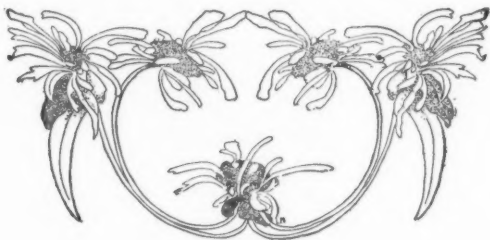
Mrs. Cathcart bent down and kissed the girl she was embracing. "The play is on, then," said she contentedly. "Exit the Man-Killer, and enter—let's see, Brock, whose cue is it?"

"Enter reformed motor-tamer, with a volume of Browning."

"To show the stern stuff I am made of," laughed the hostess of the bungalow, "you needn't tell me how it all happened until you've had something to eat."

"Listen," said Enid Morrow, holding up a finger. The canoeing party were near the landing now, and Percy Winslow's caroling was joyously audible.

"Poor old Monty!" sighed Nora Cathcart. "He's out there, catching cold, and I'm here—behind the scenes at a first night."



ASSURANCE

BE not a doubter! Though you find
The fault and flaw in men and things,
A rose is breathing on the wind,
A wild lark soars aloft, and sings!

ALOYSIUS COLL.



JANE and I had lived so long in flats in the city that the idea of living in the suburbs was delightful. We had grown weary of the long, dark halls and stuffy, dark bedrooms, and the thought of a house of our very own, where we could bounce the baby without having some one in the flat below knock warningly on the steam-pipe, filled us with joy. We looked everywhere, of course. We looked at thousands of houses in dozens of suburbs, and all the houses were too expensive for us or too impossible in one way or another, and then, as is always the case, just as we were about to give up in regretful despair we found the very house we had been looking for.

There were the neatly graveled walks, the grass-plot, and the wide porch that ran on two sides of the house. The painters were at work when we examined it, giving it a clean white finish that contrasted beautifully with the gray of the shingled sides and roof. The moment we saw the house we fell in love with it.

We had been driving about Villageville all day in one of those manure-scented wrecks on wheels that you hire at suburban stations to be driven about in, and as soon as we saw the place, and convinced ourselves that it was really the forty-dollar house we had on our list, Jane clasped my hand and murmured, "Edward!" ecstatically.

I was bubbling with joy myself, it was such a stylish, clean-looking house, but I controlled myself.

"Wait until we see the inside," I cautioned sagely. "Probably the cellar is wet and the bath tub one of those boarded-up tin affairs with damp bugs marooned in it. There is something wrong or it wouldn't be forty dollars. It would be sixty."

The boy who was driving the superlatively gentle horse that our carriage pushed along drew up at the house and folded his legs, as if to say: "Go on in and look, you cheap bluffers. I'm paid by the hour; I can stand it."

"Boy," I said, "are you sure this is 968 Elm Avenue?"

"Yep," he replied, with intense uninterestedness.

"Look at the card again, Edward," cautioned my wife. "I'm sure this house can't be forty dollars."

I looked. I showed Jane where the real-estate man had written it—"968 Elm Avenue. \$40."

We got out of the vehicle and climbed over the cans of paint that littered the porch steps and entered the house. It was better inside than out. It was ideal! The cellar was as dry as a bone, and the plumbing was all open plumbing. The bath tub was so large and white and clean that I could hardly bear to leave it. Jane ran from room to room uttering little ejaculations of joy, and saying over and over, as a woman always does: "And this room will be ours, and this will be the nursery," and so on, until I could see ourselves just as we would be when we were nicely settled in the house.

"Why don't you enthuse?" she cried. "You don't rouse up a bit."

"Jane," I said solemnly, "there is

some mistake. This house is not forty dollars. This house is sixty or seventy dollars."

"No," she insisted joyfully; "the man said forty. He wrote it on the card. I don't care if it is a mistake, he said forty, and he will have to let us have it for forty. He will have to pay the difference himself. We must have this house!"

"Don't get your heart set on it until you see the man again," I cautioned gravely, but I could see it was too late. Her heart was already set on it. All the way back to the real-estate man's office she clasped my hand and chattered until people looked at us, as we passed, as if they thought we were bride and groom. Our driver was disgusted.

The real-estate man received us with surprising coolness. We were both so excited about the house that we would not have been surprised if he had greeted us by jumping up and down and clapping his hands. I went at him diplomatically. I hate to have even a real-estate man take me for a fool.

"That house at 968 Elm Avenue," I began nonchalantly—"what did you say the price was?"

"That house? That house is not for sale. That house is one of Moller's houses," he said.

"We were thinking of renting, not buying," I said, with dignity. "We would rather live here a year or so, to see whether we would like the place as a permanent home, before we buy. What did you say the rental of 968 Elm Avenue was?"

"That's one of Moller's houses," repeated the real-estate man. "It is forty dollars on a yearly lease. Moller don't rent without a lease."

"Four hundred and eighty dollars a year," I said, assuming a musing air. "I rather like that house. You don't think you could get him to take any less? What?"

Jane grasped my arm.

"Edward!" she exclaimed. She leaned out of the vehicle and spoke rapidly: "Mr. Griggs, we'll take that house. Forty dollars a month! It is

just what we want. We will take it. Can we have it? Now, don't say we can't!"

"If Mr.—" said the real-estate man.

"Van Dam," I said, supplying my name.

"If Mr. Van Dam will leave a small deposit," he said, "that will secure the house. I will mail you the lease tomorrow for your signature."

"No!" said Jane positively. "We won't wait until to-morrow; we'll sign the lease now. We don't want to lose that house."

"You won't lose it," said the real-estate man. "If you pay a deposit the house is yours. I can't give you the lease to-day, because that is one of Moller's houses, and he has his own form of lease, and I'll have to get a couple of his forms from him. He owns a great deal of property here, and he has his own form of lease."

"Large owners often do," I said, rather vaguely.

"Yes, Moller does," said the real-estate man. "He has his own form of lease. All his tenants sign the same form of lease."

"Makes things more uniform, I suppose," I said jovially. "Good idea, I think."

"Very good idea," said the real-estate man. "You see, when all Moller's tenants sign the same form of lease, why, the same form of lease applies to all the property that Moller's tenants sign leases for."

Jane nudged me. "Pay the deposit," she whispered. "I see a man coming down street. Maybe he wants to rent our house."

When the deposit matter was settled, Jane asked the boy if he could drive us to the station by way of 968 Elm Avenue; and he said he could. We made him stop there while we admired the house again, and when we drove on we turned and craned our necks as long as it was in sight, and all the way home, on the train and the ferry and the street-car, we enthusiastically congratulated ourselves about that house. Our little flat looked unusually small

and crowded and dark when we reached it.

The next evening when I got home from the office Jane met me with smiles.

"The lease came," she said joyfully. "Or *they* came. There are two of them. What do you suppose there are two for? Are we taking the house for two years?"

"Oh, no," I explained; and I was glad to be able to show my superior knowledge of the ways of the business world. "There are always two. One we keep and one we return. If there was only one we could tear it up and say we never had a lease, and move out any time—"

"Edward!" Jane exclaimed reproachfully. "Move out of that *beautiful* house! I am surprised that you should think of such a thing! Why, we were glad to find it. You said yourself it was just the house we wanted."

"That is just it," I tried to explain; "that is what I am saying. That is why there are two of the leases. The owner keeps one, so that, even if we did want to move out, we couldn't, because he has the lease to prove we agreed to stay for a year."

Jane brightened immediately.

"You see," I continued, glad that I had satisfied her mind that there was no danger of my being inclined to move out of the house we had not yet moved into, "it is good for both sides, because if the owner had the lease, and he wanted to get us out, *he* could tear up the lease, and claim *he* never had one."

Jane stared at me in dismay.

"Edward," she cried, "you *shan't* send that horrid owner a lease! He will be sure to tear it up, just as you say, and make us move. As soon as he finds what a nice house it is, and how pretty it is with the walls all decorated the way we will have them, he will tear up his lease and put us out. We won't let him have the lease. We will sign it and put it in a storage-vault or something, where it will be perfectly safe."

I had a good deal of trouble explaining to Jane that as long as we had our

lease it did not make any difference to us what the owner of the house did with his; and by the time I was through Jane was insisting that I must find the most fire-proof safety vault in New York in which to store our lease after we had signed it. She said it would be terrible if, just when we had moved in and had the curtains up, there should be a fire and burn up our lease. She seemed convinced that the only object in life the owner of that house had was to make us move out again; and by the time dinner was over, and I had opened my desk and got a pen and ink to sign the lease, she was in the most suspicious frame of mind.

When I seated myself at the desk Jane drew her chair up beside me.

"I didn't like the way that real-estate man talked about leases, in the first place," she said. "I knew he was up to some trick. You must be very careful, Edward, and sign it in the right place. Sign it with a stub pen, so your name will be big and hard to erase."

I spread out one lease and began to read it. Jane took the other and began to read that. I could see that she had no faith in the honesty of Mr. Moller and the real-estate man. She considered them a conspiracy of some sort.

"Lease made this ninth day of April, nineteen hundred and five, between Thomas Moller, Lessor, and Edward Van Dam, Lessee," she read. "What does that mean, Edward?" she asked. "Why aren't you both lessors or lessees, if you both sign the lease? Is there anything queer about that, Edward? Don't take any chances. If you don't know why it's that way, change it. I don't see why you aren't a lessor as much as he is. I would change that word after your name to lessor if I were you."

"No, Jane," I said kindly but firmly; "it is correct as it is. You see, he—Moller—is the lessor, because he is leasing the house."

"Well," she insisted, "aren't you leasing it, too?"

"Now, Jane," I begged, "don't argue. It is all right. Lessor is the person leased from; lessee is the person leased

to. All leases are that way. I never saw one that wasn't. I wouldn't have one that wasn't that way."

She looked at me as if she had not and never would again have quite the faith in me that she once had, but she read on:

"Witnesseth," she read; "that said lessor hath and hereby doth demise, and said lessee hath taken and hereby doth hire and take, all certain premises in the city of New York—"

"There!" she explained triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you to be careful? 'In the city of New York'! I knew we would find some trick in this lease. That man is trying to get us to sign for some house in the city of New York! I never heard of such robbery! To get people to fall in love with a house on Long Island, and then sneak in a lease on some stuffy place in the city of New York! Some flat, I dare say! He thought we would sign it without reading it, Edward. It is lucky I was so careful—"

"Jane," I interrupted, "please stop! Where is Villageville if it isn't in the city of New York? All that part of Long Island is in the city of New York. Flushing is, and Jamaica is, and all that part of Long Island is. Look here—the lease goes on to say: 'more particularly described and limited as follows: Lot 4, Block 6, McGraw's addition to the town of Villageville, with the dwelling-house thereon with appurtenances.'"

"How do you know our house is on Lot 4, Block 6?" asked Jane, still unconvinced.

I laid down my pen and the lease. "Jane," I said severely, "I *don't* know. Do you imagine any man knows every lot and block in New York City by number? How do you suppose I *could* know?"

"Then," said Jane coldly, "you mean to sign a lease for something you know nothing about. You don't know and you haven't the slightest idea what Lot 4, Block 6, is, and yet you mean to sign for it."

"I do," I replied firmly. "Don't be foolish, Jane. It is all right. A man

can't be expected to get a surveyor and have a whole county measured up every time he rents a house."

"If you feel that way about it, Edward," Jane said, with resignation, "I suppose you will do as you like. I—I was only trying to—save you from a mistake. I—I—" she began, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Jane dear," I said, "don't cry. I did not mean to be harsh. In business you have to take some things for granted, dear. Everybody does. There wouldn't be any business if we didn't."

"I know I am not much of a business man," she replied faintly. "I only thought—"

"I know," I put in hastily; "and you did just right. 'For the term of one year,'" I read, "'beginning the first day of May, 1905, at noon, and ending on the thirtieth day of April, 1906, at ten o'clock in the forenoon—'"

"See!" cried Jane, suddenly alive again. "He is cheating us out of two hours. I call that small; very small!"

"To be occupied by him as a dwelling, and not otherwise—"

"Hum!" said Jane musingly.

"What is it, dear?" I asked.

"To be occupied by *him*," repeated Jane. "I suppose I can live in the house, too, can't I?"

"Certainly, dear," I assured her. "And we can have company, and keep servants."

"Why doesn't it say so, then?" she asked. "Is that business, too?"

"Yes," I said, glad of such an easy escape from an explanation. "'At an annual rental of four hundred and eighty dollars, payable monthly, in advance, on the first day of each month—'"

"Of course," said Jane sarcastically, "you could wager he would put that in. He's that kind of a man. Hadn't you better add 'at eight o'clock in the forenoon'?"

I ignored this.

"During the continuance of the term, and, further, upon the covenants and conditions following, viz: 1. That the lessee shall pay the rent as aforesaid, as the same shall fall due."

Jane glanced at me, as if to say: "You see?"

"2. That the lessee shall take good care of the demised premises and its fixtures, and suffer no waste——"

"I thought 'demised' meant 'dead,'" said Jane. "What are 'demised' premises? Are they dead ones?"

"You are thinking of 'deceased,'" I said; and then I had to wait while she looked for "demised" in the dictionary.

"There!" she exclaimed, pointing to the word. "'2. The death of a sovereign or other exalted personage.'"

"What does it say under '1'?" I asked.

"Transfer. Transmission," Jane admitted reluctantly. I did not crow over her. She did not give me an opportunity.

"About this 'suffer no waste,'" she said. "Does that mean I shall have to watch the cook every minute to see that she doesn't peel the potatoes too deep or throw out things she might warm over for the next day's lunch? If it does, I sha'n't live in that house. If that Mr. Moller can keep a cook from wasting——"

"Jane," I said, "it doesn't mean that at all. You know it doesn't."

She giggled.

"What does it mean, then?" she asked. "What can you waste about a house?"

"It must mean the water," I said. "I don't know what else."

"I thought we had to pay for the water," Jane suggested.

I read on quickly. To this day I don't know what waste we were not to suffer.

There were the stipulations that the lessee must make and do all repairs, keep the drain and supply-pipes and connections free from ice and other obstructions, keep the sewer connections free from obstructions to the satisfaction of the municipal and police authorities, and finally deliver up the premises in good order and condition.

Jane listened to all this with the air of a martyr, but when I read the fifth clause of the lease she rebelled. It said:

"That the lessee shall further promptly execute and fulfil all the ordinances of the city and State governments applicable to the said premises; and all orders and requirements imposed by the board of health and the police and fire departments, etc., etc."

Jane said she would not have delegations from the city government and State government and board of health and police department and fire department nosing around the house at all hours of the day and night. She asked sarcastically why the United States Government had been left out of the lease, and suggested that I had better write it in, with further agreements to live up to the rules and regulations and by-laws of the post-office department, attend the Methodist church, obey the Ten Commandments, eat prepared breakfast foods, and vote the Republican ticket.

She was still trying to think of cutting things to say about the lease, and strongly advising me not to sign it, when our door-bell rang.

"I expect it's father," she said, "and he will tell you not to sign it, too. You are too easy-going, Edward. You would sign it if I did not prevent you, and we would be in all sorts of trouble, agreeing to all those silly things."

She opened the door, and our hall-boy from the lobby down-stairs stood there.

He grinned in his usual good-humored way. "Mistah Van Dam's wanted at the telephone," he said.

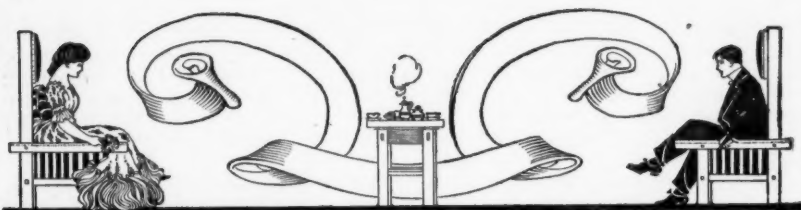
"All right. Very well. He will be down immediately," said Jane quickly. She closed the door with one hand while she waved the other at me frantically.

"Edward!" she cried. "Edward! Sign that lease this moment! Quick! I just know it is that real-estate man telephoning to say we can't have the house! Sign the lease! And then you can tell him it is already signed, and that it is too late now to back out. Quick!"

I signed.

She sighed with relief.

"Now," she said, "you can go down."



EXCLUSIVE BAR HARBOR

By Anne Rittenhouse



LIKE Gaul, all Bar Harbor is divided into three parts—the natives, the first settlers, and the newly rich. Two of these parts, the natives and the first settlers,

mingle with affectionate regard for each other outside of the social lines; but for the newly rich the natives have no tolerance except for the chance of getting as much as they can out of them; and the first settlers regard them as interlopers, though in many cases as social equals—at Bar Harbor, if not anywhere else.

It is a delicious triangle of social points, and the person who goes there and does not understand the delicate balancing of the three usually gets into trouble.

The last to understand it are the mere millionaires, who, having found out that the place is rarely beautiful and worth spending money on, have decided to put palaces here which Newport, with its lack of ground, forbids. While these people bring unlimited wealth to the place during the summer, and leave behind them a trail of bank-accounts in the names of the natives, they are always regarded with a certain suspicion.

No summer resort in America is as clannish as the Bar Harbor of to-day. Even White Sulphur, with its century of tradition and its mellow aroma of social precedence, is more cordial to the stranger within its gates than this mountain-bound spot in New England.

But in the beginning of things the

simplicity of the lives of the first settlers at Bar Harbor was such that they and the natives met on cordial grounds (always, however, as tradespeople and idlers), and accepted each their clan name in friendly spirit, making no mistake in what was due and what was to be expected from the other side. And this perfect understanding still prevails.

It was almost entirely from Boston and from Philadelphia that these first settlers came. The arrival of New Yorkers is more recent, although Gouverneur Ogden, of Gotham, was one of the very first of the aristocratic families to find out the beauty and the charm of this spot tucked away in an alcove of mountains. But he did not really lead the way for his townspeople. Boston was the first to emigrate; the Minots and Wells, Doctor Derby, the Sturgis family, all starting in to make the place their own. On their heels came the first families of Philadelphia.

These summer refugees from various cities are held together with strong ties because of their Bar Harbor life. They are not such autocrats as they were in other days as to who should and who should not be admitted socially in the Maine village, but they are still the dominant and controlling people.

The natives are by no means uneducated or without ambition, but one of the dominant features of Bar Harbor life is the peculiar way in which they differentiate themselves from the summer cottagers. They are mostly French

émigrés, as all that part of the coast was settled by thrifty French families who came over so long ago that their names have become Anglicized. Such famous families as the Stevenses, of Hoboken, and the Pendletons, of Virginia, say that many of their relatives began life in the little Maine town and drifted southward, adapting an American pronunciation to a French name.

The natives have the New England thrift grafted on the French taste for trade, and they can drive a good bargain and make money out of the opportunities that come their way better than many other natives of first-class summer resorts.

Their attitude toward those who are controlling the situation in summer has nothing in common with that at Newport, where the natives are of distinguished birth and high culture. These frankly look down on the very rich who have built up houses around their cliffs, ignore them, and certainly disdain to make money out of them.

Not so the Bar Harbor native. He rents the front of his cottage, or the whole of it, eagerly to the best bidder, and sees that the latter pays him for food and drink, for hack hire and gardening; and when September goes out in a burst of glorious sunshine and vivid colors over mountain and sea, he looks after his bank-account, reopens the cottage, puts up new curtains at the windows, and lives on the proceeds of his summer dealings.

The delightful part of it is that he and his family do in winter just what the cottagers do in summer.

They do not imitate the newly rich; this would be intolerable to them, but they follow freely on the footsteps of the well-beloved first settlers.

If euchre has been the fashion in the gay month of August, then the natives go in for euchre when it comes their time to enter into social pleasures. When the pendulum swings toward bridge whist in summer, it is bridge whist in winter. The gowns that were fashionable at the Swimming Club are imitated for the evening party of Mrs. So-and-So in January. These imita-

tors will freely tell you whom they are copying, but ten to one it will not be the inmates of the houses on Vanderbilt Point, nor the mansions down Frenchman's Bay; but it will be a friendly replica of "Emily," "Lily," "Susie," and a list of others.

For thus do the natives speak of the first settlers—always by their given names, and preferably by their nicknames, if they possess them. And this is not done only behind the backs of the lovely and charming Boston and Philadelphia women who have spent their summers here since the days of the cradle; it is the custom in daily intercourse.

Sprowl, for instance, the famous proprietor of Bar Harbor's most famous restaurant, and who knew every man, woman, child, and dog that had a right to be known, never troubled himself to call any one Mr. or Miss who was under thirty-five years old. In this little place of his, where one got the best broiled lobster in America, every one of importance came to eat or to buy food. It wasn't overclean, and Sprowl himself was not overscrupulous in his conversation, but as a character, as a personality, he was accepted by every one, and accorded the honors of a Delmonico. Nor did one of the "great ladies" of the town resent it as undue familiarity when, in speaking to her of her son, he concluded with emphasis: "Well, drunk or sober, he's always a gentleman."

And speaking of Sprowl recalls Foley, the man with "the" buckboard, who for generations seemed as much a part of Bar Harbor as Kebo Mountain. The mountain still stands, but Foley is no more. He had an almost superhuman facility for being on the spot, and was always "just around the corner," no matter when you wanted him. A social register and guide combined was Foley, and he knew the social tenderfoot at a glance.

Everybody used his buckboard when paying calls, and depended upon him to be "personally conducted" through this ordeal. "I think you had better go to the Adamses' house first," he would

venture, without a flicker of a smile; "for I saw them out shopping a little while ago, and you can miss them and save time," and, no audible protest coming from you, the buckboard was forthwith headed for the Adamses'.

But these are stories of "the good old days" at Bar Harbor; and in telling them to strangers the first settlers are wont to sigh. They are proud of the prosperity of this Twentieth Century Bar Harbor, of course, but they would willingly go back to the times when pie and doughnuts were served every morning for breakfast. Those were intimate days, when everybody was related or close in friendship to every one else.

Parties in a formal sense were unknown. Elaborate dressing was out of the question. Eight o'clock dinners were left behind in civilized centers. Outdoor life was the one thing the people craved; and with mountains to climb, wonderful waters to paddle over, and sturdy islands on which to take tea in the brilliant summer afternoons, there was no lack of vigorous life from sun to sun.

Then were the cottages more like camps—a two-story frame building, with a hall down the center and a room on each side, being the most pretentious construction in the way of a house. The stairs were so primitive that they did not have banisters; they were merely steps up one side of the wall. Bath tubs, of course, were unknown; and the cottagers brought with them huge wooden tubs, which were placed by the side of the bed and used in English fashion.

The first ripple of social life that reached the place was the introduction of mornings at home; not afternoons, mind you; that was entirely too formal. A few of the leading women took certain days on which all Bar Harbor foregathered on the porches or in the dining-room.

At one such gathering at a well-known house, so many people came that chairs soon gave out; thereupon all the bath tubs were brought down from the second floor, covered with Indian

blankets, and placed around the wall for the older guests.

The first hotel, which allured the fashionable folk outside of the little intimate group of cottages was the Rodick House. Men over seventy years old, now celebrated for wit and wisdom, will smile and grow mellow when you ask them of Rodick's House with its "fish-pond" in the glad old days. The fish-pond was so called because here, in the center of the house on the lower floor, gathered the beaux of the summer. Angling for them came the belles. Many a fish was caught—sometimes to be thrown back again; other times to be held a captive for life.

Side by side, and in friendly relations with the fashionables who discarded the cloak of formality for the summer months, lived the Passamaquoddy Indians in tents. They were not there as a government exhibition, but maintained their regular life on their own ground, as though the white man had never intruded. Commerce and the love of trade cleared them out in scattered directions, and some of the ground on which they wove baskets now sells for ten thousand dollars an acre.

When the world of wealth finally woke up to the rare charm of sky and sea, of land and mountain that the Boston and Philadelphia exclusives were holding as their own, there began to go up some of those wonderful places that are less talked about than the Newport "cottages," but are none the less beautiful. In truth, they are more so, for the surrounding estates are masterpieces of the landscape-gardener's work. They are more like European wooded parks than anything usual in America.

You can bowl up Ocean Drive in a victoria or a buckboard and never catch a glimpse of a house, and yet if you could the sight would be much grander than afforded by the drive in Newport.

The places stretching out from Vanderbilt Point, which used to be Ogden's Point, are built to face the sea, which has no beach, but drives itself in great

white breakers against red and purple rocks covered with foliage. From the back of the houses out to Ocean Drive, there is a stretch of wooded estates through which no passer-by can see. Each house is as protected as though it were in a forest. There is no approach to it without permission, and no way for the curious and the vulgar to gaze into the front doors of those who are able to pay for privacy.

Bar Harbor is the only exclusive summer resort where this is possible.

The same is true down Frenchman's Bay, where President Cassatt, of the Pennsylvania Railroad, has his summer home. The houses here have an approachable water-front, and many of them have little private piers, to which the various boats are attached. Each of the magnates along this stretch has as many boats in his wharf as horses in his stable.

This seclusion is costly, however, for some of the land is held at the rate of six acres for sixty thousand dollars. But it adds to the atmosphere of exclusiveness that Bar Harbor more than any other summer resort has earned for itself. It takes peculiar charm or pedigree or luck to get into the controlling set here. Many come, but few are chosen, and, although for a time there are weeping and gnashing of teeth, the despair is usually turned into sneering retrospection. The failures often go to Newport, get in the moneyed set there, and then speak of Bar Harbor as "provincial, you know."

It is a bit of provable gossip that a very beautiful young matron of aristocratic Southern birth, who, as she put it, "married the wrong man, but was going to make it right," came to Bar Harbor with trunks of finery and her own personal beauty as her social assets. She had heard the place called provincial so long that she thought it would be an easy first step to a secure position in the city where her husband lived.

Weeks went by, and her only chance of amusement seemed to be in playing tennis with her husband on their own court twice a day. Some smiled at her, many met her, but few, very few,

either called or asked her into their houses. In the middle of this failure came a Newport man, a Croesus of New York. He saw that she was beautiful, he found that she was charming and knew how to spend money in a way less quiet than sensational. He advised her to go to Newport and aim at his set. He would follow her there and present his friends. So she packed up, bag and baggage, and left Bar Harbor in the middle of the season. Three weeks later she was at the core of the Newport set, and she has since become a leader.

This is only one experience out of many, with more or less variation. It matters little to Bar Harbor that Newport puts the stamp of approval on what it lets starve from neglect. Many of the Bar Harborites are of the same families as the Newporters, but they have widely differing opinions as to who is who, and what is what.

Sensationalism does not lead the social procession under Mount Kebo. To try it is a fatal mistake. Not that any vicious disapproval is shown; Bar Harbor is too well-bred for that exhibition. Those whom it doesn't approve of are simply never allowed to pass the inner gates—and indifference is more cruel than condemnation.

The person who wishes to get into Bar Harbor's inner circle may live sumptuously, and the person whom she wishes to meet may have rooms in a boarding-house; but that does not alter the case. She of the boarding-house can pass the other with unseeing eyes for decades of summers.

Of course much of the simplicity of the old days has gone, but the intimacy and informality have not. What you wear and how you entertain do not determine your social position. There is no one code of dress as at Newport. Chiffon frocks, real lace, and picked pearls may constitute a morning costume, and so may a short duck skirt and a linen blouse—and they may often be seen chatting side by side. There is no place where dress and social prestige seem so independent of each other as at Bar Harbor.

Among the wealthy who own palaces and entertain like nabobs, there are, of course, much aristocracy and undisputed social position. Not all the members of the controlling class are of medium wealth; but there are hundreds in these summer days who go there with only money-bags as a cudgel to knock in the barriers, and it is mostly these who fail in doing what they thought was simple.

Because of all these conflicting sets to-day, Bar Harbor has acquired the reputation of being cosmopolitan. Here go celebrities, notable visitors, and weary statesmen. They prefer it to Newport, because of its peculiar atmosphere of do-as-you-please-ness. It is one of those remarkable places in the world where your neighbor asks little and cares less about your doings. It is probably the only place visited for weeks by Alice Roosevelt where she was not even regarded by the curious.

In the old days there was no organization, social or otherwise, which brought people together, and to which membership was desired by strangers; but the Swimming Club, the Canoe Club, and the Pot and Kettle now stand out as dominant factors in the social pastimes.

The first of these is a very gay place, indeed, and is somewhat akin to the Newport Casino. It is a charming clubhouse, fronting which is a swimming pool with a stone wall. On the balconies of the club are small tables where luncheon is served, and at this hour all the different people in Bar Harbor commingle. Here are also given balls and tableaux, but the most unique feature of the Swimming Club is its orchestra, composed of forty pieces from the Boston Symphony.

Bar Harbor is prodigiously proud of its musical side. The Boston Symphony is as much a part of its life as

swimming and yachting. Adamowski, the first violin of the Symphony, and his very delightful wife, are leading spirits socially. They came to Kebo with the mantle of Beacon Street's approval on them, and nothing more is asked in Bar Harbor. This is also the summer home of the Kneisel Quartet, and among the central figures here is Emma Juch, who takes an active interest in the musical life of the town.

The next building that is to be put up at Bar Harbor is the Temple of Music, at the foot of Mount Kebo, and an attempt will be made to gather at this spot in the summer months the great musicians of this and other countries.

In truth, it is the aiming at such things as this that makes Bar Harbor different from other summer resorts. Whether it is the Philadelphian or the Boston streak that creates this yearning for what is worth while in its larger life, it is hard to say; but it is true that Bar Harbor is not content to go in for unmitigated frivolities.

Mere expenditure of wealth in entertaining would not please it. Novelty alone would not create a ripple of approval. Cleverness mixed with culture is what it really wants. Mrs. Burton Harrison has given it many happy days with her famous picnics, at which were gathered the wittiest men and women she could find. These were old-fashioned picnics, all-day ones, with the best of food and wines. An impromptu Trial by Jury which was gotten up at one of them is still part of the village talk.

Despite the wealth, the growing prosperity, the palaces, the Horse Show, and the costly equipages which run rival to the yellow buckboards, the Bar Harborites maintain that theirs is a simple life, and that therein lies its chiefest charm.



LYNNETTE'S LITTLE ADVENTURE

By Florence Wilkinson




O you think I'm weak-minded?" asked Lynnette.

"No, I think you are daring," I replied.

"I don't believe I like that," she said wistfully.

"What?"

"The way you said it—that I am daring. You mean I am bold."

"Whatever it is that you are, I approve," I said comprehensively.

"Do you?"

It was charming to see the way Lynnette took a compliment, her dark-blue eyes crinkling up to the prettiest sparkle, and her childlike lips trying not to smile. I paid her a great many compliments, and I meant them, every one.

"You like me?" she asked naively.

"Immensely," I assented. "Too much, I'm afraid."

"What are you afraid of?" I could see the dark-blue sparkle again under the long lashes. A girl's lashes are the most adorable things. But I digress.

"Of my own peace of mind."

"Oh, is that all?" she laughed, as if anything concerned with my mind were a trifling matter.

This occurred in the Serbelloni gardens. We were on the bench under the ilex-tree, and Lecco shimmered green and blue in the sunlight, where the terrace fell away several hundred feet over the tops of vineyards and little gray olive-trees. We were also under the

full battery of Lynnette's aunt's eyes—a very formidable battery. She was having tea with the English clergyman, beside a little round, white-painted iron table between two cypresses. They were finishing their first cups. This meant that Lynnette and I had just ten minutes more together. After tea Lynnette and aunt plunged into an Italian lesson. After the Italian lesson I forgot what, but something else followed with disgusting precision, and never an interval between, and so on till bedtime. The arrangements were such that I was left out altogether, and it began to dawn upon me that this *lacuna* was not accidental. Was aunt alone responsible, or was Lynnette an accomplice? I had been meaning to inquire into this matter all day.

I had heard distressingly often of a certain Lord Spenserhurst, who was expected soon to arrive on the scene. It seemed he was a great favorite with aunt. She spoke of him in the highest terms, addressing herself to me and with significant glances toward Lynnette. Lynnette at those times dropped her eyes becomingly and attacked a pheasant's wing with renewed vivacity. I could not, therefore, gather Lynnette's tastes in the Spenserhurst direction. Not knowing the gentleman, I could only respond in the faintest manner to aunt's encomiums.

I had once, quite casually, expressed my disapproval of Anglo-American alliances. It was followed by an ominous silence from aunt, and the least, just

the least, blue sparkle and lift of an eyelash from Lynnette. But to go back to the ilex-tree.

"Hurry up," said Lynnette. "Aunt's pouring out his second cup."

"What do you want me to hurry up and do?" I asked eagerly, shortening the distance between Lynnette and myself. I knew what I wanted to do, because Lynnette's cheek was not very far away, and—but surely I could not dare to hope that she meant that; and right under the aunt's eye-battery, to boot!

"Tell me what kind of person you really and truly think I am." She folded her hands in agreeable anticipation of the luxury to follow.

"Altogether adorable," I wanted to say, but decided to reserve that confession for the evening, when, perhaps—ah, perhaps—we could walk behind aunt and stand a blessed minute in the "pleached alley's" moonlight. I know a spot where the rose-smothered parapet takes a sudden turn, and you hear the *ghiro* wailing. At the present moment I would say something teasing, as more appropriate for the afternoon.

"A bit adventurous," I suggested.

I had hoped she would flash up in a spurt of anger, for Lynnette is fascinating when she is angry; but to my disappointment, she looked thoughtful.

"It is true. I am rather adventurous," she admitted, like a guilty child. "But you ought not to throw it up against me. You would never have known if I had not told you myself."

It is delicious to hear Lynnette relate her innocent "adventures," and enough to make a man lose himself. I believe it was during one of these recitals that I fell in love with her, though I am not sure, for in the light of after occurrences it is difficult to fix the chronology of that prehistoric catastrophe.

"There is one thing I never have done," added Lynnette.

"What is that?"

"Eloped!"

"By Jove!"

"Lord Spenserhurst comes to-morrow," she said pensively.

"Now, why the deuce—pardon me—drag in Lord Spenserhurst's name in this connection?"

"Oh, I don't know. I was just thinking," said she dreamily.

I was thinking, too, and exceedingly uncomfortable thoughts were mine.

"You don't mean to say—" I began sternly.

"No, I didn't mean to say anything," Lynnette answered quickly. "I was just thinking that, if one were going to elope, Bellagio would be an ideal place for it; and the nights are moonlight now."

"It is rather a wasted opportunity," I remarked.

"Of course, if one were going to elope, there ought to be a really good cause for it," she continued.

"For instance?" I asked politely—but she ought to have seen that the subject was boring me.

"Serious obstacles against an open marriage, a stern parent or guardian, or a very obnoxious man who thrusts himself upon you."

This was becoming insufferable.

"In place of which," I said stiffly, "the stern guardian approves, and the very obnoxious man begs leave to withdraw."

I considered this a neat and spirited rejoinder, and was prepared to follow it up in action, but, somehow or other, I seemed unable to stir from that bench. Every one says that the air on Lake Como is extremely relaxing. Besides, I wanted to hear Lynnette's answer.

"Oh! do you really believe that?" she said joyfully. A most erratic answer! "You don't think it would be a perfectly dreadful thing to elope, after all aunt's kindness to me? For she does mean well, though she is sometimes uncomfortable."

In my own mind, I considered that an elopement with Lord Spenserhurst, merely to satisfy Lynnette's whim for adventure, would be a piece of atrocious folly, not to say a tragedy. I expressed myself to this effect, though more guardedly.

"I should consider it unnecessary,

under the circumstances," I replied coldly.

"Why?" Lynnette looked both mysterious and depressed.

"I should postpone that adventure till I had adequate reasons and a worthy fellow."

I flung this out gloomily, having formed my own opinion of the Spenserhurst chap.

"You are very unjust," she said. I thought this would be her answer. "To yourself," she added softly.

That was the last straw. A man is not supposed to appear to the best advantage when the girl he loves consults him about running away with another man. It is unfair to put him to such a test.

"What did you expect me to say?" I asked bitterly.

"I am not worthy, either"—Lynnette's cheeks were flushed with red—"but it's not a question of worthiness when one loves."

I sprang up from the bench.

"Look here, Lynnette, this is going too far. You're torturing me too much. I wish you great happiness—I do, with all my heart. But I earnestly advise you not to elope with Lord Spenserhurst."

"Oh!" cried Lynnette, and then again, "Oh!" as if a great flood of light had burst over her. She looked illuminated from top to toe. But had I not been giving her this advice from the start? Then she began to sparkle, and the two dimples played in her cheeks. Those dimples—but I digress.

"I never thought of eloping with Lord Spenserhurst. In fact, the truth is"—her dimple deepened—"there isn't anybody to elope with. Everything else is just the way you said it was."

"What do you mean, Lynnette?"

"All that about the stern guardian, a very obnoxious man."

"It was you said that."

"Oh, was it? Well, it is all so, and eloping seems the only way—the only way—out of the difficulty."

While Lynnette's voice rambled dreamily on, I was thinking—thinking very hard.

"And the nights are moonlight—and Lord Spenserhurst comes to-morrow. But there is no man to elope with."

The light had dawned upon me in full. I could hardly speak for the choke in my throat.

"Lynnette, I am a man. I am unworthy, but I love you, as you know. How much, you do not dream. I love you, I love you, I love you! Would I do, Lynnette?"

I tried to speak dreamily, as she had done, but I fear my efforts were not successful. A green lizard scuttled quickly up the wall near us, darted into a hole, and then hung his head out like an eavesdropper.

"Maybe you'd do," she replied, as if she were doubtfully matching a sample. I have often shopped with Lynnette, so I recognized the inflection.

I upset the bench. I don't know just how I managed it, but in the confusion of setting ourselves to rights again, and restoring Lynnette's hat to its place—and a few other little details—I snatched a kiss from her hand.

We heard at that moment the profuse eloquence of the Italian master, and knew that recess had expired.

The interval until ten o'clock that evening may judiciously be skipped, for nothing really worth while happened till Lynnette and I were embarked in a gay little boat, manned by one *barcaiolo*, for Menaggio. We were going to be married by the English clergyman, and then our plan was to take train and boat by way of Porlezza and Lugano for Pallanza, and telegraph to aunt in the morning from the Borromean Islands. Rather an attractive itinerary, I thought, but you will soon see what unexpected obstacles stood in our way.

It must be prefaced that Lynnette and I had exchanged our ordinary clothes for the costumes of the Italian people. This was her idea, to add the last flavor of romance to our little affair. She said that the disguise might be useful if we happened to meet any boating acquaintances on the lake.

"They might mention to aunt that they had seen us, you know, and if she

got word of our adventure—why, she would pursue us—and——”

“But you are quite your own mistress, Lynnette.”

“I know it, but aunt doesn't think so, and she could make things uncomfortable.”

This was true, for aunt was a very determined lady. So we sent our baggage by the steamer to Menaggio, and started out blithely, Lynnette stunningly pretty in her short skirt and silver halo of hairpins sticking out, and I feeling like a fool in my wide trousers and scarlet sash.

As events proved, these costumes did add the last flavor of romance, but not the romance we anticipated.

“Lynnette, darling!” I said, as we floated into the liquid Italian moonlight. The perfume of the oleanders reached us, and the faint bells of the fish-nets tinkling half-drowned in the water. “You are sure, quite sure, that you will never regret——”

“It's perfectly beautiful,” she replied, “and oh, such an adventure! How can you ask me—you? And won't aunt be surprised when she gets the despatch in the morning!”

“You know,” I said gravely, “it is happiness so great for me, I can hardly believe it to be true.”

“You dear stupid!” whispered Lynnette, and nestled up to me in a heavenly way.

I was beginning to learn that, light-hearted as she seemed, she had been unhappy under her worldly aunt's scheming chaperonage. My little, unworldly, light-hearted Lynnette!

At Menaggio the clergyman was not to be found. He was calling on the ladies in the hotels, or strolling on the Strada Regina, or embarked on a “*giro in barchetta*,” like ourselves. So the next best thing was to take another boat for Cadenabbia, only an hour's row distant, and secure in that place the clergyman's services.

Lynnette was in the best of spirits as we turned down the Contrada toward the pier. I had little heart for the picturesque windings of the ancient street, or the Lombardesque compositions that

the *contadini* unconsciously made. It had rather dampened my hopes to find that venerable clergyman not at his post.

“Do I like it?” cried Lynnette. “It's delicious—another adventure! It's like the colored prints they throw in with your purchase at Poldoni's.”

It was late, and the luxurious little craft with cushions and awnings had all disappeared, as well as their owners. Down the violet-gray waters of Como the lights were winking out one by one. At Bellagio the brass band in the Grand Gardens no longer beat the air with strident waltzes. But the customs boat still patrolled the lake with its arm of uncanny moving light. I discovered some fellows pushing off from a cove in a native *camballo*, and bargained with them to take us round to Cadenabbia.

Finally, ensconced beneath the black hoops of this queer skiff, Lynnette and I slid off over the dark waters in the shadow of the rocks. Our boat carried a cargo of some kind, stowed away under the rough seats. It looked to the eye like those bundles of twigs for fuel which you see the peasants carrying down from the mountains on their backs, but as the men handled it, the impression was given of a burden considerably heavier.

I noticed from the start something strange in the manner and attitude of our men, and they in turn probably made the same mental observation in regard to us. They muttered among themselves, cast covert glances at us, and lacked entirely that genial *bon camaraderie* which is the charm of the Italian people.

They had demanded an extortionate price from me, and payment in advance, but to this I gave little thought. I would have paid the price of a kingdom to have Lynnette safe and my own that memorable night. And, now that we had embarked upon our adventure, I for one would never strike colors. But the dark look and sinister voices of the little crew inclined us to silence as we crept under the shadow of the Sassio Rancio. The moon-pale sky still floated fair, and the Brega blew its gentle gale.

Instead of taking a straight course for Cadenabbia, our men snaked warily in and out, following the undulations of the coast-line. Several times the searchlight of the *torpediniera* was flashed in our direction, and at each recurrence the rowers were quickened to renewed activity.

"You would think we were escaping from pursuers!" laughed Lynnette.

"It's quite the custom with these Italian *barcaioli* to hug the shore," I replied carelessly.

Then the wide dazzle of the electric beam fell full upon us—upon us and the crew—and we saw by that lightning exposure the terror in their faces, and the tense agony of effort with which they bent to the oars. One of them scanned the shore anxiously, as if looking for a possible landing, but the yellow rock rose up sheer and forbidding from far below in the water.

"It's rather rude of those people to direct that horrid light on us," said Lynnette. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I think it exceedingly rude."

The government boat, manned with its armed men and equipped with this powerful reflecting light, lay off between Menaggio and Varenna, where it could sweep both arms of the lake with its inquisitorial beam. It was evident that Lynnette had never happened to find out the purpose of the patrol, and I did not intend to enlighten her—at least, not till it was necessary.

The steamboat again directed its great sheeny blaze on us, so that Lynnette covered her eyes with a shudder of pain.

"*Che noja!*" said one of the men. "We're done for." His tone was smothered, but I heard him.

The *torpediniera* was at least two miles distant, but had already begun to sheer round in our direction. We could hear the heavy panting of the engine as she took on steam, and the wheels chopping noisily through the water.

Our men struck out boldly into the moonlight and labored at their oars like madmen. It was useless to keep in the shadow of the shore, for the search-

light poured steadily upon us, revealing us to ourselves as well as to the armed officers who, as I perceived too plainly, were hot on our track. Lynnette, with her head on my knees, sat very still.

"Are you afraid, darling?"

"I am not afraid of anything, with you," she replied.

Our men were evidently making for some obscure landing at the foot of San Martino, where they could effect a desperate debarkation and escape with their contraband cargo among the wild mountains to westward. They took a tremendous risk, but their lives and their fortunes depended on it. I was with them for the time being, though it was not to my taste to be mixed up in a smuggling adventure with desperadoes. One of the men, a pale fellow with a consumptive cough, was failing at his bench.

"*O poveretto me!*" he kept wailing.

"Sit here in the bottom," I said to Lynnette, "and put your head so."

"Are they following us?" asked she, in a tone of mingled awe and delight.

"I think so."

"Is it aunt, do you suppose?"

I had to smile at the picture of "aunt" instigating the ruthless vengeance of the Italian Government.

"No, Lynnette; it is a patrol-boat. They think we are smugglers."

I sprang across to the failing oarsman and pulled in his place—pulled for dear life.

Lynnette raised her head and surveyed me. The electric light flaming across Lake Como's placid sheet made the moonlight wan and gray by contrast. All the bright beaded towns had gone black now, and Bellagio lay dark and still. Lynnette's hair caught the light from behind, and fringed around her face like a saint's aureole. I had never seen her look so lovely. Meanwhile the angry *torpediniera* was bearing down on us. Her awkward hulk, black and white, like some hybrid monster, could be dimly discerned, but all else was blotted out in that hideous sheet of radiance of which we were the focus and center.

The smoke from her funnels, the quick gasps of her machinery, showed that she came nearer every minute.

"*Cristo Santo!*" cried the man who seemed to be leader, and with a fury of Italian oaths all the men disappeared, dropping over the side of the boat into the water. Lynnette and I were left in sole possession of the ill-fated craft.

The heavy *camballo* made small progress under my unaided efforts. It would have been wiser if I had abandoned the oars and showed the white flag of surrender. The *torpediniera* was now so near that I could see the height of the smoke-stack, the white edifice of the captain's wheel, and the dim shapes of a group of men who stood aft. Something ominous in their half-glimpsed attitudes told me that they stood weaponed, with the deadly muzzles of their guns directed toward us.

"Lie down, Lynnette!" I shouted.

It was none too soon. Her little form was almost obliterated in the bottom of our barge as a bullet whizzed past my ear.

"Halt! Surrender yourselves!" cried a foreign voice from the government boat.

I delayed not in obeying these orders and showing myself entirely amenable to the spirit of Italian law. Of course there would be no difficulty in explaining ourselves when we were once on board the *torpediniera* and in direct communication with the courteous Italian officials.

But the courteous Italian officials were not in good temper after their long pursuit, our obstinacy, and the escape of some of the criminals.

"Ho, ho! a lady in the case!" cried one of them, a fat and fiercely mustached individual, lifting Lynnette over the railing with odious gallantry. "Ho, ho! you're too pretty, my dovelet, to mix with such a bad nest of hawks."

I could have cheerfully tossed the man overboard for his insolence, but prudence bade me contain myself.

"You are mistaken, sir," I said, in my best Italian. "I am not a smuggler. I am an American on my way to

Cadenabbia to be married, and this lady is—is to be—my wife."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the insolent man, with redoubled mirth. "We shall see, we shall see. What do you find there below, Alessandro?"

Alessandro slung up pound after pound of tobacco and chocolate, contraband goods of the darkest dye.

"*Per Bacco!* what do you say to that—and to that?" demanded one of the officers, thrusting each packet under my nose.

"I know nothing whatever of this cargo," I asserted, feeling myself guiltier every minute as the absurdity of the situation grew upon me. "I hired passage on this boat for Cadenabbia."

"Tell them all—tell them everything," pleaded Lynnette. "They will surely believe you."

Thus encouraged, I proceeded, under the withering mirth of the customs officers. It is astonishing how discomposing to one's ordinary straightforward manner is the dense incredulity and contempt of a group of listeners. I felt that I was telling a sorry and jumbled story.

"Merely a playful disguise of the gentleman!" interpreted the wit of them, to his fellows. He pointed to my truly plebeian outfit.

"A distinguished gentleman from America!"

"An honorable visitor at the Villa Serbelloni!"

"A generous gentleman who assists at the oars!"

"On his way to a wedding—with his bride!"

"A most original gentleman!"

Each new phrase convulsed them with mirth. But meanwhile they were preparing shackles for our wrists—mine and Lynnette's. They were not going to run the risk of any more overboard escapes. I was sick with rage and helplessness.

"*Ouf*, is it an American fashion," leered the fat one, "to take passage with smugglers at midnight? So as to be married at Cadenabbia! Ho, ho! Cadenabbia!"

The word "Cadenabbia" seemed to

mark the apex of the humorous. It is indeed an excellent word on which to cackle. I have never heard any sound so execrable as the cackle of the courteous Italian officials.

"Tell them the whole truth," pleaded Lynnette. "Tell them you are a civil architect, or whatever it is, and that my name is Lynnette, and about aunt, and how she wouldn't let us get married and so we ran away."

"You tell them, sweetheart," I said, too sick at heart to open my lips again.

"If you please," said Lynnette in her pretty, broken Italian, "I will tell you the whole truth."

It was as if I had been prevaricating so far. But they all gathered round her in mock gallantry. They evidently found something about us that was out of the ordinary, or they would not have given us so much of their time and attention. We were now steaming slowly back toward Varenna.

"This gentleman and I love each other very much," said Lynnette, an exiguous Italian vocabulary constraining her to certain quaint turns of speech. "Being forbidden to look upon each other by my rigorous guardians, we determined to effect a midnight flight—and to marry ourselves. We thought it would be a considerable adventure—which it is," she finished, with a little quiver of the lips.

"So you like an adventure, eh?" the fat one remarked, chucking her under the chin.

I had at least the satisfaction of knocking him over with a straight-out from the shoulder. Then it was that they put the irons on my wrists.

"They are good story-tellers, the pair of them," remarked the wit. "I would wager they had been in the pantomime before they took to this."

I can shut my eyes this moment and see every one of those officials—their red-striped trousers, their fringed epaulets, the glitter of their buttons, and the waxiness of their mustache ends, twisted to a point as if to pass through the eye of an enormous needle. The wit with his one-sided nose and perpetual devilry of wrinkles, the gallant

who was so fat that the back of his hands looked padded, and the chief officer who resembled a wolf, with hungry gray cheeks and two protruding tusks of teeth.

The moon had now gone under a smother of mackerel clouds, and a few large drops of rain fell at intervals, like operatic tears shed to slow music. The officers took their fill of amusement and triumph, and prepared themselves, some for sleep, some for a game of *tre sette*. The wolf consulted with Alessandro as to what disposition they should make of us till morning.

"What are they going to do?" asked Lynnette dismally.

"Put us in the hold, out of harm's way. It won't be half bad," I said, with forced cheerfulness. "We shall be alone together, and can have a little chat."

"I don't feel much like chatting," said she, whose spirits were suffering at last from a slight depression. She turned to the wolf.

"What will happen in the morning, *signore?*" I could not but admire her invincible politeness.

"You will have a chance to tell your story to the judiciary at Como."

"Meanwhile, there is time to improve on it," added the wit, wrinkling his nose.

We descended below.

"Sweetheart, there is just one possibility left," I said, with a restrained caress which was all my irons would allow. "We can give your aunt's name and the—ah—English clergyman's, and with such unexceptionable references we—"

"It sounds like a situation-wanted advertisement," shivered she.

"But they might take the trouble to verify our story."

"And be hauled up before aunt and Lord Spenserhurst! What a flat finale!" Lynette laughed a little at the ghastly humor of it. "Why don't you laugh, too? It is funny."

I had no doubt that there were elements of humor, and that, later, I should appreciate them at their true value.

"Do you recognize these individ-

uals?' the wolf would say, dragging us forward into the Serbelloni salon. Lord Spenserhurst would fit his monocle, aunt would put up her lorgnette. Oh, a sweet picture we should make! No, I thank you; I prefer the judiciary at Como." Little Lynnette's mirth was becoming hysterical, and I feared that the next moment she would burst into tears.

It may not have been more than a quarter of an hour that we were in the hold of the *torpediniera*, but in that time I acquired a lifelong sympathy for the profession of smuggler, and resolved, when I had amassed sufficient capital, to found a Home for the Protection of Aged and Infirm Smugglers. While I was revolving in my mind an attractive name for my institution, we heard the sound of a lively colloquy on deck, in which were mingled voices unmistakably English-speaking. It was evident that a party of visitors had boarded our Italian boat. And now a curious *dénouement* came about; the very pursuit which we had in the first place feared proved our salvation.

We distinguished the ringing tones of aunt, the smooth mealiness of the Cloth, and a new voice, precise and consequential, which Lynnette identified as Lord Spenserhurst's. From the voice, I could imagine the man a fastidious—but I digress.

"I knew he would turn up," whispered Lynnette. "He always does a day too soon. That was how aunt discovered my absence."

"Listen," I said; "they are describing our costumes. How did they ever find out?"

We caught other fragments of the

conversation; and, lastly, the customs officers' Italian eloquence in vehement denials.

"The angels, the seraphs!" cried Lynnette. "They deny ever having seen us!"


Her voice was so clear that I hushed her to silence. Not having a free hand to put to her lips, I was obliged to use other means.

Yes, it was true. Aunt's tale of the fugitives corroborated our own story in every detail. We judged that the English clergyman and Lord Spenserhurst, as frequent visitors to Bellagio, were known to the custom officers, and the latter recognized the name Lynnette, which they had heard me use. Their sympathies, as was natural in a romance people, were enlisted at once on the side of the fleeing lovers. Lynnette would have it that my appearance better fitted me in their eyes for the rôle of a lover than did Lord Spenserhurst—but Lynnette is partial.

To bring matters to a conclusion, be it said that soon we were on deck again, heaped with apologies and the recipients of every courtesy. Indeed, it was through their ardent efforts that we secured our luggage from Menaggio and were enabled to take the early train at Varenna that morning. Our plans were necessarily somewhat altered, as we struck for Chiavenna and the Engadine instead of the Borromean Islands. But that was a matter of slight importance. Even the darkened coach shooting through rocky tunnels between Varenna and Colico was paradise.

"And it was rather a nice adventure, after all, wasn't it?" said Lynnette. "Oh, dear, perhaps it will be the last!"





PLAYS AND PLAYERS

CHANNING POLLOCK

New York the only city in the world that has roof gardens. The three at present in operation are Hammerstein's Paradise Gardens, the Wistaria Grove and the Aerial Gardens, the best of which is the first. George Cohan's revival of "The Governor's Son" at the Aerial under the management of Klaw and Erlanger



ONE August, four or five years ago, when the heat had begun to bake my soul and the things of every day were growing unbearable, I threw two shirts and a copy of "Barrack-Room Ballads" into my grip, and went to Maine. Some particular friends of mine—as particular as my friends can ever be and still remain friends—had invited me to rejoice with them in the delights of their cottage on the coast.

All the way to Boston, while the soul aforesaid was being browned, I pictured those delights. Breakfast on the piazza, a short horseback ride, a dip in the ocean, a nap in a cool room, with white curtains blowing at its windows; a lunch including home-grown berries and country milk; a loungy afternoon, followed by dinner, cigars, and a long, sweet night. Nothing to think; nothing to do; nobody to see, and a month ahead of me! It has always been a dream of mine to be utterly idle—to hibernate in winter and vegetate in summer. The dream was about to be realized. Ah!

A week later I wrote my stenographer that she must wire me to return

at once. That piazza had turned out to be the hottest place this side of Central America. The next hottest place was the "cool room," facing the sun and close under a tin roof. Horseback riding was rendered difficult by the terrible state of the roads, and the pleasure of a bath in the briny deep was nullified by the pain of standing on jagged rocks to dry one's self, keeping a sharp eye out for wandering women the while. Early rains had taken the taste from the home-grown berries; the country milk was shipped to the city regularly every morning, and the children of my particular friends clambered over my chest continuously through the loungy afternoons. The only part of my dream that came up to plans and specifications was the detail of long nights. The nights certainly were long. Considering the odor of kerosene in what little air there was, and the activity of the mosquitoes, they might be described as interminable.

Never believe anybody who tells you that it is charming to be idle. Before my telegram arrived I had got to the point where I willingly walked a mile to see the tide come in, and welcomed a game of tiddle-de-winks as Curtis Jadwin did he tape that wormed from

his ticker. In my mind's eye the city loomed plain, with its hosts of people up and doing. Every one in the world seemed busy, excepting myself. Gunga Din carried water, O'Kelly "rode Hell-for-leather," and even Danny Deever got himself hanged, while I sat around looking at the sky and waiting for that message. "Nothing to do!" Well, rather! I got back to town at last, and, excepting for a five days' fishing expedition, I haven't been out of it since.

The Lady Who Goes to the Theater With Me declares that the greatest summer resort in the world is New York, and I agree with her.

Why shouldn't it be? Most of the creatures in the country, and a vast number in the city, work hard to make it so. A good fan is infinitely less uncertain than mountain winds; an enameled tub or a tile-bricked plunge is so much more convenient than the sea, and then—oh, the delight of having anything on earth you want, from the newest novel to the freshest fruit, just at the other end of the telephone! If I were taking boarders and lodgers for a living, every June I should insert in the daily papers an advertisement like this:

SUMMER BOARD. Glenmore - Apartments-by-the-Sea. Swept by electric breezes. Bathing, boating, automobiling, etc. A hundred amusements at hand. Ocean only a short ride distant. No insects. No objectionable people. Privacy guaranteed. Excellent table. — West ——— Street, New York.

Every season the metropolis gets to be more and more desirable as a place to spend one's vacation. When unselfish woman has put white covers over all the comforts of home and hied herself off to the hills or the shore, selfish man, kept in town to pay the bills, begins to discover the truth of this assertion. With his books about him, his desk at his side, and an iced drink before him, he sends out for an evening paper, and quietly picks out a good place to dine and an appealing entertainment to follow.

Eating well is New York's long suit, and there is no end to the out-of-door

restaurants from which one may choose. If your income is limited, you will find a score of French or Italian table d'hôtes at fifty or seventy-five cents, which may be discussed on a back porch gracefully transformed into an arbor. There is an excellent café on Sixth Avenue with seats for fifty or sixty diners in front, and several of the cross-town streets boast retreats of the same sort. Then there is the place in the Bronx which Clyde Fitch made famous in "The Climbers," and which offers a number of private open-air rooms, separated from one another by partitions of grape-vines. Staten Island abounds in restaurants *à la fresco*. There are six or eight on the channel through which the ocean-going steamers enter and leave the port, and, as you smoke your cigar, you watch majestic liners beginning and ending long voyages. George William Curtis' friend, Titbottom, would have indulged in long flights of fancy regarding them, and so may you, if God has given you an imagination. When night comes, a fairy city of lights, an iridescent mirage, is conjured out of the darkness straight ahead. The waiter will tell you it is Coney Island—if you ask him. Don't ask him, and you may make believe that it is fairy-land.

There is a hotel at the near end of Staten Island from the glass-enclosed dining-room of which you can see New York illuminated at dusk. The view across the water is beautiful. You feel almost certain that you are looking at an ingeniously painted "back-drop," instead of at the second largest city in the world. Manhattan Beach and Brighton Beach both have hosteleries for out-of-door catering to the inner man, while Coney Island, if you like the strenuous, affords ample opportunity for dinner and a vaudeville show at one and the same time.

Should quiet or economy appeal to you, there are a hundred different things—the worst of them more amusing than watching the tide come in—from which to select your after-dinner enjoyment. The door-step is not as potent a factor in this city of cliff-dwellers as elsewhere, but perhaps you have

a broad window, with geraniums on the sill and a soft couch back of it. Trolley riding is almost as good as automobiling, and a vast deal safer; and I am sure Titbottom could not have differentiated between a ferry-boat and his own yacht. I can answer for it that the trip from Twenty-third Street to Jersey City and back, at a total cost of six cents, is one long delight; and so, in an equal degree are the trips from Jersey City to Brooklyn, and from the Battery to Staten Island. The nine o'clock boat to Coney Island is nearly deserted, and, by keeping your seat when you reach that resort, you can make the return in comfort. This takes about three hours and twenty-five cents.

Of course, either in street-cars or on the ferry, one is brought in contact with crowds, but even that is not a disadvantage. The New York crowd, separated and taken individually or in pairs, is far from uninteresting. I don't mind people, even in the hottest weather, when I'm not obliged to talk to them, and neither will you. One night last year I observed a young fellow who had gone to sleep with his arm about his "best girl." Something called the lady away, and a bearded old man took her camp-stool. He did not notice his neighbor, and was greatly astonished five minutes later at being made the object of sudden and energetic demonstrations of affection. I have paid a dollar to see just that thing done on the stage, and not as well done, either.

"The way-of a man with a maid" on an outing hereabouts is not a bit mysterious, the poet to the contrary notwithstanding. It is, indeed, distinctly frank and open. He knows that they are to be married some day, and she knows it, and neither of them cares a hang whether the general public knows it or not. *In recreation veritas* describes the fashion in which an outing makes clear the characteristics of the folk one sees looking for fun near Manhattan. Everybody is good-humored in the search, too; you never saw an ugly-tempered crowd in Gotham. Even the inebriates one runs across want to take the world into the secret of their happi-

ness. "Shay, ol' fel'," a young man said to me one evening on the deck of a ferry-boat, "thish's the sixth time I've been 'cross."

"That so?" I replied. "Like the trip?"

"Like the trip, nussin'!" he exclaimed. "I'm tryin' t' go t' Jersey. Ev'ry damned time I wake up we're on 'r way back t' N'York."

Gotham has five indoor theatrical productions this summer. "The Social Whirl" continues whirling at the Casino, while "The Lion and the Mouse" remains at the Lyceum, and, at the date of going to press, Blanche Bates in "The Girl of the Golden West" was still at the Belasco. All three of these plays have been reviewed in AINSLEE'S. Late in May, that phoenix among managers, Alfred E. Aarons, presented at the New York a "summer soufflé"—whatever that may be, except alliteration—called "His Honor, the Mayor." This proved to be a most diverting vaudeville bill, strung together on a libretto which, stripped of its specialty features, would be rather a pamphlet than a book. Blanche Ring and an extremely clever company, including the same Pony Ballet by grace of which "Piff, Paff, Pouf" once survived a scorching September at the Casino, disport themselves in a manner that makes one confident of the dishonesty of the thermometer. Surely no eight girls could dance as does the Pony Ballet and still smile if it were really as torrid as it seems.

The fifth of the "summer shows" is "The Tourists," written by R. H. Burnside and the prolific Gustav Kerkker, which is to be the successor to "Fantana" at the Lyric. It hadn't eventuated when this article was penned, but will have done so before the magazine is out.

New York is about the only city in the world that has roof-gardens, and, at present, there are three of them. None of the three really lives up to the name, the whole trio being, in reality, only top-story theaters. They are open at the sides, however, and quite as cool as it is possible to be in August. More-

over, one is permitted to smoke within their precincts, and to purchase tall glasses containing a great deal of fruit and ice, and some liquid. Two of the three places of amusement have coverless annexes, to which the audiences repair during intermissions. What one loses by being unable to see the stars one gains by insurance against a drenching, and so, perhaps, honors are even.

Hammerstein's Paradise Gardens, atop the Victoria and Belasco Theaters, are now in their ninth consecutive season, and, to my way of thinking, offer the best entertainment in town. The performance is always "straight vaudeville," undiluted by book or score, and one may drop up—funny language, ours!—at any time of night with the moral certainty of being amused. The feature of the opening bill was a young person luxuriantly named Lalla Selbini, and supplied with the additional sobriquet, "La Belle Baigneuse," which is French for "The Belle Bather," or something of the kind. Mademoiselle Selbini must have been impressed at childhood with the injunction to "hang your clothes on a hickory limb, but don't go near the water," for a "back-drop" with a painted stream on it was as near to bathing as she got—in public, at least—during her stay at Hammerstein's.

La Belle's obedience to the rest of the command, however, secured her a profitable engagement. Her clothes may not have hung literally on hickory limbs, but certainly they did not hang on hers. Mademoiselle Selbini, whose figure was charming and at least five hundred dollars per week, put on a very tame bicycle act, but succeeded, as aforesaid, less because of what she put on than of what she took off. Her appearance in the nucleus of a bathing-suit on a trick-wheel suggested vast possibilities for the Venus de Milo and the Greek Slave when they shall have been overtaken by the accident that befell Niobe.

Abie Mitchell and her "Tennessee Students" are to be at the Paradise Gardens all summer. They are a lively lot of colored people, who dance and

sing with abandon and some tunefulness. The Fays, mind-readers, also are scheduled for a long stay. Mind-reading as a profession has never been convincing to me, because I know that if I could read minds I should find a more profitable field for my intuition than the vaudeville stage, but hosts of people go to Hammerstein's with the belief that their thoughts are to be translated into speech by the Fays. Machnow, a Russian giant nine feet three inches tall, and Dronza, a mechanical illusion, also supply diversion.

The Wistaria Grove, idiotically called "The Conserve of Coolth," has passed under the management of William A. Brady and Joseph Hart. It is an extremely pretty place and well deserving of patronage. Half the performance is vaudeville, and very good vaudeville indeed; the other half being a musical piece, entitled, "Seeing New York." This comedy begins the "show," and if you tarry over dinner you may succeed in missing it. Carrie de Mar, Al Leech, Cheridah Simpson, Clifton Crawford, and other talented people, do their best to enliven the play, in which there is not a single melodious song or original idea. The one recommendation of "Seeing New York" is that the chorus includes a large number of exceedingly comely girls.

After a long, sad experience with experiments in the Aerial Gardens over the New Amsterdam Theater, the Messrs. Klaw & Erlanger picked out what they regarded as a "sure-thing winner" this summer in George Cohan. Mr. Cohan, who was playing "George Washington, Jr.," at the Herald Square when the picking took place, met expectations by reviving his first and, in many respects, his best musical farce, "The Governor's Son." With this piece as a vehicle, he has been doing an excellent business for hot weather.

"The Governor's Son" is a lively entertainment, and that is about all that can be asked in August. It has a plot, but three trips to the Aerial Gardens have not quite enabled me to figure out what that plot is about. I do know that

it leads to a four-cornered case of mistaken identity, which becomes extremely amusing in the second act. What is more important, the story permits of the introduction of several good songs and a variety of spectacular novelties. "Push Me Along in My Push-Cart," rendered by a chorus in wheel-chairs; "If Bill Gillette Could Only See Me Now," in which the soloist is assisted by an ensemble garbed as the several heroes mentioned in the ballad; and "I Love Every One in This Wide, Wide World," sung by a dozen girls under electric-lighted bonnets, are numbers clever enough to carry any musical piece into summery success. The pantomime which begins the play is one of those occasional bits of cleverness which emanate from Mr. Cohan and are hidden behind the bushel of admiration awarded his less creditable efforts.

Three of the original "Four Cohans" appear in "The Governor's Son." George himself is funny to those who enjoy his peculiar personality, while J. J. and Helen F. Cohan demonstrate that they are players of more than ordinary merit. Julius Tannen, Truly Shattuck, and Ethel Levey fill out the cast. The performance is tastefully set and neatly but not gaudily costumed. It offers, all in all, a great many inducements to the stay-at-home in New York.

If the humidity leaves you sufficient virility to create a desire for strenuous amusement, it is a matter of course that you will go to Coney Island. The continued popularity of Coney is proof positive that the average Gothamite craves vigorous play as much as he does vigorous work. An excursion to the Island is one long series of fights—you fight for a place to stand in the crowded cars, for a table at which to eat, for seats at the various shows, for standing room on the sidewalks, and for a chance to get home before morning. I'm not sure that these contests do not appeal to the visitor along with the other excitements of the resort; with the blaring bands and the cries of hawkers and the odors of pop-corn and frankfurters. Certainly, I have never

seen anybody return from Coney who was not both tired and happy.

Coney Island in the year 1906 is very much as it was in the year 1905, and will be in the year 1907. The press-agents' tales of rebuilding and redecorating have the same basis in fact that exists in the old, old story of ice-cooled theaters. Luna Park is practically unchanged, and so are Dreamland and Steeplechase and the Bowery. There are one or two new shows in each place and an extra tower or two, but the salient features are the same. In the Johnstown Flood. Building the rain pours on Mount Ararat instead of on the hills of Cambria County, and that is a specimen of the innovations at Coney. Why should it be otherwise? Human ingenuity would be taxed to improve the great resort ever so little. Sarah Bernhardt, who must have seen a few things in her time, went there in June and proclaimed the place a miracle. What is good enough for madame should certainly be good enough for you and me.

Luna's chief show this season is "The Great Train-Robbery." This crime takes place in the midst of a lot of Girl-From-the-Golden-West scenery, and the enclosure heretofore devoted to the Indian Durbar and the Naval Battle at Port Arthur. The performance is divided into two parts, the first of which gives a lively picture of early existence in a mining-camp, while the last shows the robbery itself. A toy locomotive and cars seen in the far distance are replaced by a larger train in the middle ground, and, finally, by a real train directly before your eyes. The robbers "hold up" the passengers and get away on horseback, closely pursued by the sheriff's posse. There is a great deal of hard riding and shooting, followed by a plunge into the waters of a mimic river. This particular feature is a duplication of the *scène de résistance* of "The Raiders," which Thompson & Dundy staged at the Hippodrome; and it is distinctly exciting.

Mundy's Animal Show flourishes elsewhere at Luna Park in a palpable

effort at wresting honors from Bostock at Dreamland. There is an excellent circus performance, free to all, in the center of the park, and the usual number of chutes, scenic-railways, roller-coasters, and illusions. The architectural beauties of Luna and Dreamland, together with the marvelous electric lighting, continue to be the real wonders of Coney Island.

Dreamland's big spectacle just now is "The Fall of San Francisco," a depiction of the recent catastrophe in California. The disaster pictured is, perhaps, *too* recent for a reminder of it to be enjoyed by a person of sensibilities, but great crowds have been attracted to the show, nevertheless. The panoramic production, "Creation," remains at Dreamland, with a great many other holdovers from last year. Steeplechase Park is still the paradise of the practical joker, and the various attractions of the Bowery are in full swing. Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Far East has replaced The Boer War at Brighton Beach, and Paine's Fireworks are now, as in former times, the magnet at Manhattan.

These amusements, however, are far from being the real charm of a summer in New York. In the very center of the city one finds a stretch of country more lovely than anything to be seen at the average resort. Central Park is a green dream of delight now, full of shady nooks and long stretches of inviting sward. The squirrels scamper over the paths, perfectly tame and eager to be fed; pretty children play about, and the driveways are crowded with equipages of one kind or another. Central Park and the river, with its boat-houses and recreation-piers, are ever-potent possibilities to the stay-in-town. Here, in the metropolis of the nation, are to be had the shade and water of the lake resorts, the hustle and excitement of Atlantic City or Saratoga, and home comforts such as are not thought of anywhere *except* at home. There really is little cause for the deserted husband to envy his vacation-observing wife. The greatest summer resort in the world is at the junction of the Hudson River and the Atlantic Ocean, and its name is New York.



THE QUATRAIN

ONLY four lines, and yet when all is told,
 Much tinsel is outweighed by little gold.
 "Love" is a tiny word no doubt, yet see—
 It holds all life, all joy, all tragedy.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



How the fashions have changed in the manufacture of books. Apparently there is a growing tendency toward good taste in text, binding, decoration and illustrations. Among the new books that are worth while are Owen Wister's "Lady Baltimore," O. Henry's "The Four Million," Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Fenwick's Career" and Mr. and Mrs. Williamson's "Lady Betty Across the Water"



It is some time since books were printed and published in sets of sixteen volumes to be sold at the price of two dollars and sixty cents for the set, and to those who are familiar only with the present prevailing methods of the manufacture and sale of books, such undertakings must seem nearly incredible. Yet it is a fact that an edition of Dickens was printed, bound in cloth, and placed on sale for that sum, and presumably as a money-making venture. Each reader may judge for himself as to the quality of the product, and ask himself whether or not he would care to number such a set among the books of a selected library. Nothing very sumptuous in the way of paper or binding could, of course, be expected at such a price if the manufacturer was to make a profit, but the text was reliable, and as most people are fond of a good bargain, or at least of anything that seems like one, plenty of purchasers were found. And they got at least their money's worth commercially, and a good deal more in other ways.

This one illustration will serve to draw attention to the significance of the present fashions in book-making. The cheaply made book seems to be a thing of the past. It is no longer considered

necessary, in order to put standard authors within the reach of people of small means, to print them to be sold at thirteen or fourteen cents a volume; a revolution in methods of sale has brought about a corresponding revolution in methods of manufacture, so that now a relatively expensive set of books can be disposed of as easily by the introduction of the instalment plan as the cheap one could formerly by the single cash payment.

It is not necessary to speculate upon the question whether this change has been effected by a popular demand for a better grade of book or by the direction of popular taste by the publishers. The fact of the change is the interesting point for us, and interest is added to it by considering how it is extended to the books of contemporary fiction. The average publisher of novels nowadays gives a good deal more thought to the embellishment of his publications than heretofore. There is more care taken in the typographical appearance of a book than formerly, though this improvement is not so noticeable to an inexperienced observer as it is in the matter of illustrations and binding. It is almost a matter of course to make some attempt at artistic effect in the outward appearance of the dollar-and-a-half novel. The results are not always happy, to be sure, but in this matter, at least, good intentions count for some-

thing, and it may fairly be said that in a great and growing number of books extremely good taste is displayed.

In addition to this there seems to be a disposition, recently manifested on the part of some publishers, to produce *éditions de luxe* of novels which are or promise to be popular, or books less elaborately adorned, a limited sale of which may be assured at a price above the standard. Two examples of the former are high-priced editions of Owen Wister's "Lady Baltimore," and Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Fenwick's Career," by Macmillan and Harpers respectively, and of the latter, Weymer Jay Mills' "Caroline of Cortlandt Street," and James Branch Cabell's "Line of Love," both by Harpers. A. C. McClurg & Co. have also taken a step in the same direction in the recent publication of two very tastefully decorated books, "Nicanor, Teller of Tales," by C. Bryson Taylor, and "For the Soul of Rafael," by Marah Ellis Ryan; the price, however, being the standard one, a dollar and a half.

Whether there is a sufficient demand for the higher priced volumes to justify their manufacture is, perhaps, problematical. It is to be hoped, however, on all accounts, that the enterprise of these publishers will meet with the encouragement it deserves.



It is not altogether clear to us why O. Henry should be classed as a humorist merely. Humor he unquestionably has, and of the rare kind that makes its subtle appeal to the perceptive faculties. His wit not only exacts the tribute of a laugh, but it has the unusual power of stimulating in his reader a comfortable and flattering sense of participation in it. He has a keen sense of the ridiculous, but he disdains to use it merely to make a point; with him it is a means of imparting color and proportion to his story.

As a matter of fact, he is a philosopher rather than a humorist. It is getting to be a habit to compare him to Maupassant, but he is, fundamentally, near-

er to Montaigne than he is to Maupassant. There is no contemporary writer who has as keen an appreciation of the values of human relations as O. Henry, or who weighs them so exactly. If any one doubts this, let him read "The Brief Début of Tildy," in the volume of short stories just published by McClure, Phillips & Co., under the title of "The Four Million." It is the perfection of literary art. There are twenty-five stories in the book, and this, appropriately, as a climax, is the last. They are not all of a quality equal to this, but there is not a poor story in the whole two hundred and sixty pages. Some of the best of the others are: "An Unfinished Story," "A Service of Love," "The Gift of the Magi," "Memoirs of a Yellow Dog," and "The Romance of a Busy Broker."

They are all faithful pictures of metropolitan life, from which is derived the title, "The Four Million."



It is an interesting, and even a rather significant, fact that Owen Wister's new book, "Lady Baltimore," published by the Macmillan Company, is making a great run as a "best-seller." It seems to be as popular, relatively, as "The House of Mirth" was; whether its actual sales equal those of Mrs. Wharton's book, nobody, of course, is in a position to tell except the publishers.

The fact is interesting and significant on account of the character of the story, and is only another proof of the impossibility of making any predictions as to the reception likely to be extended to any book. For "Lady Baltimore" can hardly be called a story, so slender is the plot around which it is constructed; it is rather an expression of Mr. Wister's impressions of Charleston aristocracy, a matter in which this strenuous generation would hardly be expected to take much interest.

The style of the narrative, rambling and discursive though it is, is admirably suited to the author's manifest purpose, which is to recreate for his readers the unique atmosphere of the charm-

ing old town. He has succeeded admirably, by means of the portraits of Mrs. Gregory St. Michael and Mrs. Weguelin St. Michael, in conveying the Charleston exclusiveness mellowed by human sympathy, which is the best type of Southern aristocracy; or, for that matter, of any aristocracy. They cling to their traditions and old-fashioned ideals in a way which makes one feel that in one corner of the United States, at least, there still survives the significance which our ancestors attached to the words "lady" and "gentleman"—elsewhere the words seem to carry a very different idea.

The story, such as it is, deals with the unfortunate love-affair of John Mayrant and Hortense Rieppe, which, in the attitude toward it of the former's relatives, is used to develop the author's main object.

The anonymous author of "The Secret Life," published by the John Lane Company, makes no attempt to disguise the fact that she is a woman. She has written her book in the form of a diary, because she says she must "somewhere, somehow, speak the truth in a world of conformable lies."

No doubt her intention is all right, there is every indication that she means to speak the truth, but she has conveyed an utterly wrong impression in describing her book in a sub-title as "the book of a heretic." She is no heretic. Her views on the subjects of marriage and divorce, politics, morals, disease, literature, are all in conformity with conventional standards; they are not in the least schismatic. It is true that she makes innocent attempts to shock the reader, as when she says: "I have never been quite able to comprehend the powerful appeal the Hebrew Messiah makes to the hearts of so many," but her little unconventionalities are never wholly convincing. One is quite sure that in all matters of heresy involving serious social disapproval, she would be quite safe and sane.

Nevertheless, the book is entertaining, and even interesting, as essays go,

and any one who likes to be gently shocked, feeling certain at the same time that the social fabric is not likely to be endangered, will enjoy reading it.



David Graham Phillip's new book, "The Fortune-Hunter," Bobbs-Merrill Company, is a story of a distinctly different type from the series of industrial tales, "The Deluge," "The Cost," and "The Plum-Tree," which he has heretofore published. It might be called a story of high life on the East Side, dealing as it does with some social phases of well-to-do people in that locality; "the society of the real New York—the three and a half millions who work and play hard and live plainly without pretense, whose ideals center about the hearth, and whose aspirations are to retire with a competence early in the afternoon of life."

Feuerstein, of the German Theater Stock Company, is the fortune-hunter; a cheap adventurer, living on his wits, but with sufficient personal attractiveness to make a deep impression upon Hilda Brauner and Lena Ganser, the daughters of prosperous fathers. His double-dealing with the two girls makes a rather sordid story, but it is relieved by the manliness of Otto Heilig and the purity and beauty of Hilda. The story ends, as it should, with the discomfiture of Feuerstein and the reunion of the two lovers, Otto and Hilda. It is an interesting and extremely well-told narrative.



Of the seven short stories which make up the volume just published by Robert Grant through Charles Scribner's Sons, entitled, "The Law-Breakers," there is but one which may be said to be distinctly human; the other six are substantially analytical studies of problems. That fact does not, however, impair the interest which, as short stories, they all hold.

The one exception is "The Romance of a Soul"; and even here the more or less pathetic interest of the tale is due

to the circumstances of the life of Miss Willis, the old maid school-teacher, rather than to the vital manifestations of her character. The burdens that were placed upon her, and the matter-of-fact attitude of her beneficiaries, do more to give the story a real human interest than the woman herself.

"The Law-Breakers," "Against His Judgment," and "A Surrender," are at the other extreme. They are chiefly concerned with an analysis of the motives involved in problems of life which are matters of common occurrence, and one cannot help feeling that the people are mere pawns in a game being played by the author.

Judge Grant's work is always so well done, and his purpose in these stories is so clear, however, that the reader has the satisfaction of knowing that he is getting just what it was intended he should get.



Mike Flannery, the Westcote agent of the Interurban Express Company, could hardly have been prepared for so literal a demonstration of his proposition that "pigs is pigs," else he would have avoided the dispute with Mr. Morehouse over a matter relatively so insignificant as ten cents.

We may, however, congratulate ourselves that he was so tenacious of his company's rights, otherwise we would have missed the laugh which Ellis Parker Butler's story has supplied.

"Pigs is Pigs," published by McClure, Phillips & Co., is a short story, but is full of meat. The combination of a middle-aged Irish express-agent, two guinea-pigs, and an irascible consignee, is one that is overflowing with humorous possibilities; and Mr. Butler has lost none of them.



"The Private War," by Louis Joseph Vance, D. Appleton & Co., is the author's latest book. It is the story of how a young American became involved in England, much against his will, in some of the underground in-

triguing in the Russo-Japanese War. There is no lack of action in the tale, the sort of action that keeps the reader in breathless suspense from the moment of Gordon Traill's arrival in London in the first chapter to the final tragedy of the stolen torpedo-boat in the North Sea, with which the book closes.

There is a love-story, but it is wholly subordinated to the contest between Traill and his friend Severance on one side, and the German, Von Holzborn, on the other. This enmity is due to the rivalry of Traill and Von Holzborn for the hand of the beautiful Lady Herbert. The German is as thoroughlygoing a scoundrel as it is possible to conceive of.

It is an extremely well-written book. Of course, the main thing in an adventure-story is to keep the reader absorbed by a rapid succession of exciting incidents, and in most cases this is done without much regard either to probabilities or to literary finish. But here Mr. Vance has given us not only a skilfully constructed tale, but has succeeded admirably in his character-drawing. There are indications that he may some time rival E. Phillips Oppenheim.



Joseph C. Lincoln is a perennial favorite with magazine-readers, and there is no good reason why he should not be as successful with his books as he has been with his short stories. His third book, "Mr. Pratt," has just been published by A. S. Barnes & Co., and those who enjoyed "Cap'n Eri" and "Partners of the Tide," will find in this the same qualities which attracted them in the other two.

The characteristic humor of Mr. Lincoln is, of course, predominant. It is embodied in Sol Pratt just as, in his first book, it was in Cap'n Eri, though it cannot be said that the two characters are identical. On the contrary, with an obvious temptation to make them so, Mr. Lincoln has displayed great skill in the way in which he has differentiated them. Sol Pratt lacks the sophistication which comes from wide experience of the world, that characterized his pre-

decessor. One can hardly think of Cap'n Eri as being misled as Mr. Pratt was by the peculiarities of the Heavenly Twins, Van Brunt, and Hartley, or of the "valley" 'Opper. Cap'n Eri's outlook upon life was broader and more catholic, though perhaps no more tolerant. Nevertheless, Sol is no fool; with in his limitations he is a wise man, and withal prompt to learn. It is an interesting and highly entertaining story that he tells.

Mrs. Humphry Ward's stories can always be safely recommended as books that may be read without any loss of self-respect. The impression that they invariably make upon the reader is that he is in the company of thoroughly reputable people; people whose cultivation and refinement serve to isolate them from the rest of mankind, and enable them to observe calmly, critically, unemotionally, the drama of human life as it is played by those less favored. There is never any danger that he will be betrayed into making any vulgar display of his feelings—even to himself.

This is Mrs. Ward's own attitude, and it is a tribute to her skill that she is able to draw her readers into it with her. "Fenwick's Career," just published by Harpers, is the latest example of her peculiar craftsmanship. One may read of the struggles of the artist for recognition, of the miseries created by the fancies of his jealous wife, of the torture of the high-minded Madame de Pastourelles, without a single throb of human sympathy. The interest stimulated by the characters and their troubles is detached and remote. Yet Mrs. Ward exacts the admiration which the practised technician always commands. Her results are what are to be expected from the use of superior tools skilfully manipulated.

"Fenwick's Career" is said to have, as a basis, certain facts in the life of George Romney, but this criticism is more fanciful than practical, prompted, obviously, by Mrs. Ward's admitted use of biographical facts in "Lady Rose's

Daughter" and "The Marriage of William Ashe," and by Mrs. Fenwick's reading of the life of Romney.

A story by Mr. and Mrs. William-son without the automobile as the theme is something of a novelty. "Lady Betty Across the Water," McClure, Phillips & Co., possesses this distinction, for, though there are, of course, automobiles in it, there is a great deal besides.

Newspaper and magazine readers are familiar with the ideal American heiress who crosses the water to marry an English or Continental nobleman for his title, incidentally restoring the fortunes of a decaying family, but the younger daughter of one of these impoverished houses coming to America to marry a rich American is a notion which appropriately finds its place in fiction.

Lady Betty Bulkely, daughter of the Duchess of Stanforth, comes to America with Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, one of New York's Four Hundred, the object being to give that young woman's elder sisters better opportunities to make advantageous marriages. Her adventures on this side of the Atlantic are not so very much unlike those that we are accustomed to read about as befalling the average American society girl in New York, Newport, and at house-parties. That she should be attracted to a young steerage-passenger on the steamer that brought her over is a little unconventional, but the final explanation is satisfying.

Lady Betty tells her own story, and does it in a bright, entertaining, attractive manner.

"The merest tyro in book-making would know better than to invest a profound treatise on the 'Philosophy of Mind' with a rose-colored binding pranked out with a profusion of gold curlicues and illuminated text. And this simple illustration exactly fits Miss Lamb's case—her binding, if one may use the term, was strikingly inappropriate."

This is "The Intellectual Miss Lamb's" introduction by the author of the story, Florence Morse Kingsley. The book is published by the Century Company.

Miss Lamb is already a B. A. and an M. A., and is ambitious to be a Ph. D. But fate, in the person of William Gregg, intervenes, and her career is diverted—happily, of course—to the more prosaic one of wife and mother. The story has a familiar note, but it is too well told to lack interest on that account.



"Nicanor, Teller of Tales," by C. Bryson Taylor, A. C. McClurg & Co., is a romance, the scene of which is laid in Britain in the first half of the fifth century.

It is a tale chiefly of the life and adventures of Nicanor, the son of a British peasant and a Hebrew woman, who had inherited from his great-grandfather, on his father's side, a marvelous gift of story-telling. It is interesting, not only on account of the stories themselves, but also on account of the convincing atmosphere which the author has succeeded in creating. Being a romance, there is, of course, a love element, which is supplied by Varia, a high-born Roman maiden, and Eldris, a slave girl.

The book is bound, decorated, and illustrated in a manner almost sumptuous.



"The Tracer of Lost Persons," by Robert W. Chambers, D. Appleton & Co., is not by any means a detective story of the ordinary type. Indeed, it might be truly said that it is neither a detective story nor an ordinary one, for it has nothing to do with the punishment of crime, and so far as it contains a plot it is entirely novel.

The story might, with some propriety, be called "The Tracer of Lost Ideals," for the principal business of that individual seems to be the joining together of the ideal man and woman. Within the compass of some three hundred pages, The Tracer, who is a very kindly old gentleman, succeeds in bringing to five men and five women as much happiness—presumably—as any human being can reasonably look for in this place of wrath and tears. His efforts in behalf of Gatewood, Burke, Kerns, Harren, and Carden are wholly satisfactory to them, at least up to the close of the chronicle; what their wives thought of it is not recorded, and the omission may or may not be significant.

That the conception of the story is somewhat fantastic is nothing against it, for it will be read with a great deal of interest and entertainment. A typical summer story.



Important New Books.

"Coniston," Winston Churchill, Macmillan Co.

"The Incomplete Amorist," E. Nesbit, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Susan Clegg and Her Neighbors' Affairs," Anne Warner, Little, Brown & Co.

"The Sin of George Warrener," Marie Van Vorst, Macmillan Co.

"The Tides of Barnegat," F. Hopkinson Smith, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Miss Frances Baird, Detective," Reginald W. Kauffmann, L. C. Page & Co.

"Red Saunders and His Pets," Henry Wallace Phillips, McClure, Phillips & Co.

"The Garden, You and I," Mabel Osgood Wright, Macmillan Co.

"In Cure of Her Soul," Frederick J. Stimson, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Prisoner of Ornith Farm," Frances Powell, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Long Day," The Story of a New York Working Girl Written by Herself, Century Co.

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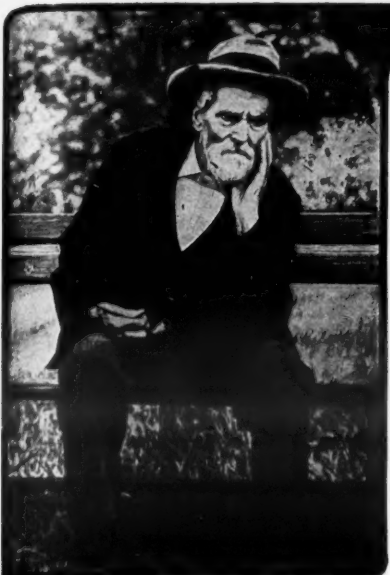
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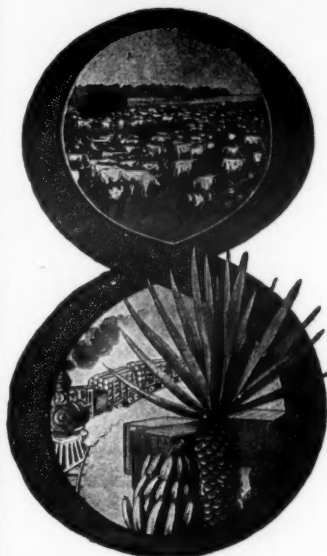
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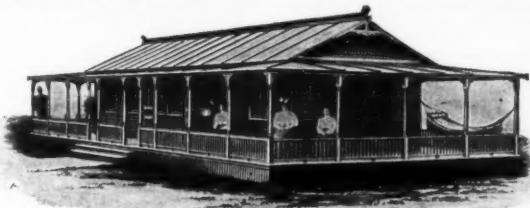
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We have printed and distributed of the August number 145,000 copies, and it is believed that the average monthly circulation for the year will not fall below 165,000 copies. All copies returned from the news-stands are promptly mailed as samples to lists of selected names throughout the United States. This is a fixed policy and will be continued, so that advertisers have the benefit in bona fide circulation of every copy printed.

This reduction of rate is made possible by the fact that THE SMART SET MAGAZINE is sold to the public at a price—25 CENTS—which insures a fair profit to the publisher without requiring the advertiser to pay the greater part of the cost of production.

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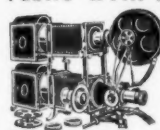
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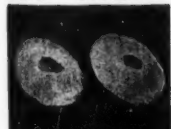
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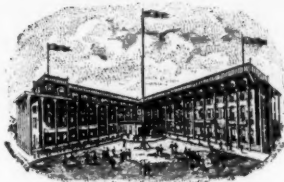
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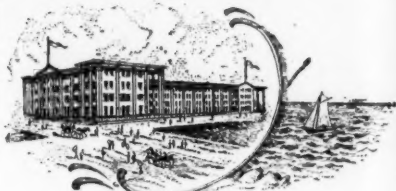
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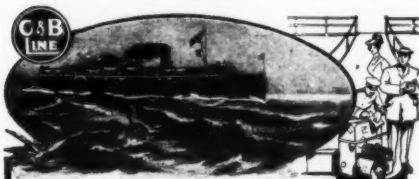
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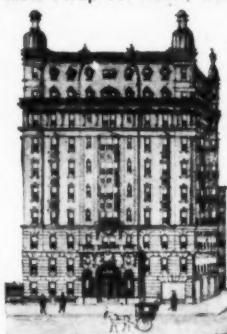
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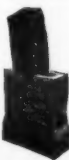


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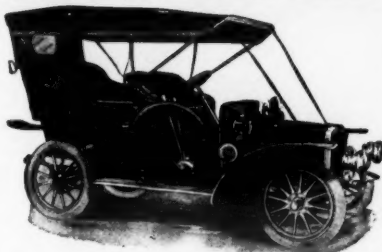
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A Motor Car which will meet the highest expectations successfully—and it will be delivered promptly—no exasperating delay.

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FACT and FICTION

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By **ALFRED HENRY LEWIS**

This is an historical novel that is true—every word of it. Andrew Jackson—who does not know him as one of the greatest of Presidents?—but who knows him as a lover and, incidentally, a duelist? When you know his private life as intimately as Mr. Lewis tells of it, you will know one of the most romantic characters in history.

The Treason of the Senate

By **DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS**

Senator Elkins, of West Virginia, one of the powerful lieutenants of the "merger," and Senator Knox, of Pennsylvania, whose record is one of devotion to the men who exploit the American people—both are scourged in the August issue with facts about their deeds that patriotic citizens will read with horror and surprise. This instalment of "The Treason of the Senate" shows Elkins' connection with the infamous crime of "rebating," and how Knox betrayed Roosevelt after the President had retained him as Attorney-General.

Cause of the Great Earthquake

By **DAVID STARR JORDAN**

Much has been written about what the earthquake did, but practically nothing has been said about the cause which underlay the whole calamity. Mr. Jordan, a scientific investigator, well qualified to write on this subject, shows how and why the terrible force locked in the bowels of the earth, wrought this frightful destruction of the "Queen City of the West"—and, indeed, the whole Pacific coast. This article is written in a popular style. Every one will be the wiser after having read it.

Cast Away on Feather's Folly

By **NORMAN DUNCAN**

Every one who loves the adventure of the sea admires Norman Duncan's strong, virile stories, and this one is in his best style. The story runs breathlessly to the end, and the reader himself will scarcely breathe until he has finished it.

Ingratitude of Mr. Rosenfeld

By **BRUNO LESSING**

Lessing is the one humorist who is able to present to magazine readers the ordinarily somber life of the New York east-side Ghetto in garb of lighter hue. Lessing's characters are inimitable, and, moreover, true; they have all the strength and reality of a master story-teller and observer of human nature.

Angels' Visits

By **W. W. JACOBS**

Every one who has read Jacobs' short stories, which have been published from time to time in the **COSMOPOLITAN**, says that this wonderful English humorist suggests Dickens. He has all of Dickens' best manner of word caricature, with all the fidelity to nature that made that great novelist the greatest. "Angels' Visits" will certainly teach the laughless how to laugh.

A Honeymoon in a Canoe

—Extracts from a Bride's Log Book

By **WINIFRED FALES**

Those who would like a delicious little tidbit of literature, written almost in a whisper of words, ought to read "A Honeymoon in a Canoe." It makes dainty, entertaining reading, and might, perhaps, suggest to prospective brides and bridegrooms a delightful way to avoid the crowd on the momentous "trip," and of obtaining quiet and time for "honeymooning."

No magazine to-day presents to its readers such a fine galaxy of authors as, David Graham Phillips, Jack London, W. W. Jacobs, Henry D. Thoreau, David Starr Jordan, H. G. Wells, Alfred Henry Lewis, Bruno Lessing, Ernest Crosby, Norman Duncan, Edwin Markham, Octave Uzanne, and many others. All have written for the

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